

異世界食堂

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3

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The Other World Dining Hall

— Isekai Shokudou —

- Volume 3 -

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[fox's coffee time]

CHAPTER 41

MONT BLANC



Thomas, an adventurer of the Kingdom, was surprised at its wonderful taste.

(What is this!? I've never eaten a confectionary this delicious!?)

This confectionary... used an abundant amount of Marone¹, it was a great deviation from normal confectionaries that Thomas knew.

Placed on top was a vivid yellow Marone that was boiled in sugar water.

It crumbled down inside his mouth and dissolved like the woolen threads that covered the entire confectionary, which also used Marone as its ingredient.

Hidden beneath the threads and melting inside his mouth was something white and soft that tasted like sweet milk.

And underneath all of those was soft and yellow sweet bread.



These sweets were high-class enough that they were appropriate for aristocracy.

A soft sweetness that dissolved in his mouth, he wanted to eat another bite.

As soon as he repeated this action, the pastry disappeared in a blink of eye.

[Ou, demon lady! Give me one more Mont Blanc!]

[Yes, just a moment please!]

He had no choice but to repeat the interaction that he had already done twice.

While waiting, Thomas leaned back on his comfortable chair.

(When I received this quest, I thought that 3,000 silver coins is an absurd amount to find a single dessert...)

Indeed, in this case, he was satisfied by this exceptional reward.

(This is thanks to that maid grandma's wisdom, huh.)

Discretely, he thanked the head maid that had ascended to the heaven last winter.

Yes, if that woman had taken this secret to the grave, Thomas would neither be asked to work for 3,000 silver coins, able to know the presence of this restaurant, nor be able to eat Mont Blanc...

——— She wanted this to be known.

This request was accepted by Thomas 10 days ago.

From the Imperial City, there was a town that could be reached in 3 days by riding a carriage and walking.

To the east of the city, there was a well-groomed orchard of Marone trees where large amount of Marone could be harvested in autumn.

Most of Marone used to make Roasted Marone and Boiled Marone in the Kingdom was harvested in this town, making this town indispensable for the Kingdom.





Due to the Eleanor who was the feudal lord's wife, this town was more often called as "Town of Marone" instead of its original name.

...The current lord was her husband who married into her family, an influential ruler.

She was Thomas' current client.

[So, that...]

[Yes, I would like you to find a confectionary using Marone.]

To convince Thomas who doubted his ears, Eleanor who was in her mid-twenties nodded and smiled glitteringly with a sex appeal that Thomas had never seen before.

Apparently she was serious.

(Is she serious? 3,000 silver coins for a confectionary?)

Thomas leaked a surprised voice.

The beginning of this was the head maid who was a veteran that served the household ever since Eleanor's grandfather's time.

She bought some wonderful sweets that used Marone, a special product of this town, a couple of years ago during autumn and served it to her master.

It was a wonderful sweet that surpassed all other sweets that used Marone, and quickly captured the hearts of the lord's family including Eleanor.

Every year she looked forward to this time of year.

[Since that person passed away, you do not know where to obtain it.]

[Ee, that's right. Even though we already looked around for it.]

According to what he heard, the head maid was quite old and had caught a cold last winter that caused her to pass away.

She said that that affair was just a few days ago.

Well, it couldn't be helped. When people were on their death bed, there was no time for them to explain anything.

The problem was that she took the secret to her grave.

For many years, she served the lord's house. She had neither relatives nor children.

Even the maid that she had trained to take over her position did not know where to get it.

At first, Eleanor thought that she could buy it when the season came.

After all, that dessert used a lot of Marone, which was the specialty of this town.

Although it was more refined than any ordinary sweets, there's no doubt that it was made by a patisserie of this town.

That's why when autumn came and it was the right time to buy confectionaries, Eleanor used her authority to find the dessert in the town...

It turned out that no one knew where the head maid obtained the sweets.

[I see... so that's why you requested my service.]

[Ee, that's right. In place of the deceased Gisele, please find the illusionary dessert named "Mont Blanc". For the prosperity of this town.]

Yes, that dessert... it's not just that Eleanor wanted to eat it.

Since Mont Blanc had been served to special guests before, Mont Blanc became known as a special confectionary that could only be found in this town.

A high priestess serving the God of Light who boasted having the most number of followers in the Eastern Continent and a powerful merchant who was prominent even in the Kingdom were among the people who searched for that fascinating sweet.

At this time of year, occasionally some people visited the town of Marone in search of Mont Blanc.

Even if it's just a pastry, it was still a problem to the lord's house since the offered price was high.

Therefore, they would like to know the method to obtain Mont Blanc even if they had to pay quite a huge amount.

To do so, they brought this up to the royal court and raised 3,000 silver coins in order to hire Thomas.

[I understand. I accept this request.]

After listening to her story, Thomas pleasantly accepted it.

Thomas was originally an adventurer that was better at investigating than fighting... a former treasure hunter.

It was unfortunate that his eyesight became worst, which was required for fine techniques of a treasure hunter, but his knowledge and his intuition that he cultivated had not declined.

An adventurer who specialized in research, not fighting.

That was Thomas.

[Let me take care of it. I will definitely find out the whereabouts of that Mont Blanc.]

Thus Thomas set out to investigate. That was 8 days ago.

The third day after Thomas received the request.

[As expected, no one knows, huh...]

Thomas sighed as he threw a grilled Marone to his mouth.

To say the least, the search for Mont Blanc was difficult.

Originally, basic investigating... where the head maid obtained the Mont Blanc had been done by the lord's men, it was already confirmed that no one knew.

Thomas tried to do it again (since Thomas had the lord's seal, everyone was cooperative) but the result was still nothing.

On the contrary, influential people told him to "tell me if the source of Mont Blanc is known".

No one knew... in other words, that maid grandma obtained it in a way unknown to anyone else in the town.

He then suddenly noticed.

As a rule of thumb, it should be difficult for the head maid to obtain "Mont Blanc" without anyone noticing it.

First of all, she was not the one that made it. Although the head maid was able to cook simple cuisine, the confection was made with a technology that was unknown to craftsmen.

In the first place, if she made it herself at the kitchen, it wouldn't be a phantom dessert.

Besides, she was the head maid who served the lord's household for decades, the townspeople knew her.

Maybe children wouldn't recognize her, but adults who grew up in this town should know her at the very least.

Somebody would recognize her if she carried the Mont Blanc at the streets even if she put it inside a box...

It was a rare box made of bright sky blue paper with a picture of a winged dog monster.

That's why Thomas noticed its possibilities.

(In other words, the place where the head maid obtained Mont Blanc... inside the mansion, maybe?)

The conclusion that came out of his investigation was somewhat strange, but it was the only answer left.

It would not be surprising if she did her housework in any location of the mansion.

Also, she served Mont Blanc to her master only once in 7 days, so it was something that could only be obtained in those times.

(Even when Eleanor several times asked her to bring him the dessert more than once in 7 days, she always refused.)

Thinking that way, he asked several maids who worked at the mansion and discovered the head maid's strange behavior.

A storeroom where Eleanor's childhood toys and dresses were stored.

The head maid often visited that place to clean it regularly even though it was rarely used.

It seemed that the head maid told them "Because I am old now, I wish to relive my memories of the mistress", but she went there too frequently.

(There's no mistake. Mont Blanc could be obtained there.)

Thomas was a veteran treasure hunter.

His intuition told him that that was the location of the treasure.

Then as he investigated, he checked the room once a day for 3 days... he found a black, magical door with a picture of a cat on the fifth day.

[Oi, oi... what is that?]

A magical door that did not exist yesterday.

It appeared in the storeroom.

[Normally thinking, the other side of the door should be the supplier.]

He pondered only for a while.

Thomas grasped the door's handle... and opened it.

'Chirinchirin', the door opened with a light bell sound.

[Oya, welcome. What an early customer.]

A mysterious room that he had never seen before spread before his eyes.

A middle-aged man who was cleaning the room along with a demon girl who showed her legs boldly... the owner cheerfully greeted Thomas.

[Aa, wait a moment... etto, here, is there a confectionary named "Mont Blanc"?]

[Mont Blanc huh? ...By chance, do you know Gisele-san?]

The owner who remembered a regular who was a cake lover that he had not seen for half a year questioned the customer who he had never seen before.

[...I have never seen that person directly though.]

There's no doubt. This was the supplier of Mont Blanc.

Thomas was convinced of his work's success and smiled.

After being told about the "otherworld dining hall", he ordered Mont Blanc to taste that rumored sweet.

Thomas who ate four Mont Blanc asked for "takeaway" with great satisfaction and thought.

(Well... I completed my request, but I'm not satisfied with that small amount.)

This wonderful sweet that likely would never enter Thomas' mouth ever again.

If he reported the door's existence along with the sweet, he would likely never be

allowed to use it after receiving his reward money.

(Maa, what should I do...)

That was why Thomas secretly decided.

There were a variety of customers who visited the restaurant and ate various types of food, people ranging from commoners to aristocrats, demons and monsters.

There was no doubt that there was at least the same amount of “doors” as the customers.

(Ma, I’ll try to find it...)

It might be unexpectedly near the Kingdom.

He thought such.

[Sorry to keep you waiting! I brought 6 Mont Blanc!]

[Ou. Thanks.]

Thomas received sweets with a value of 3,000 silver coins in exchange of 3 silver coins, which is the price of the 10 Mont Blanc that he ordered.

1. Marone – chestnuts

CHAPTER 42

SCOTCH EGGS



Emilio, a young apprentice priest serving the Red Goddess, stood in front of a woman sitting on a large and durable stone chair with a tense expression.

[Thank you for coming. We sincerely welcome you.]

Lucia was the name of the woman who was smiling brightly.

Despite being over 50 years old, she had no trace of wrinkles, still had the charm of a woman, and her thin silk priestess clothes showed that she was also a follower of the Red Goddess...

As a high priestess and one of the contemporary leaders, all of those who served the Red Goddess knew her.

For the congregation of the Red Goddess religion that lived around here, Lucia's presence was like a queen.

Her glossy beauty had not decayed though she was over 50 years old; she had the

power to fully transform into a “dragon” with the power of her faith.

She had successfully done so several times during the war against the followers of other Gods.

Also, she was the descendent of a family that produced many excellent priests, and more than 1,000 years ago, when northern barbarian invaders attacked with magic and weapons, it was said that her ancestor turned into a dragon and destroyed many enemies.

Even the powerful priests at the “Sacred Holy Temple” of the Red Goddess couldn’t disregard her.

[No... such... I only came here to receive training... that... I’m honored.]

Emilio answered her bashfully.

Emilio was still an immature follower of the Red Goddess.

By all rights it should be a big-shot of the Sacred Holy Temple that visited, but the one that came was a priest that was told to go there to receive training.

(After all, I...)

Suddenly, dark feelings weighed Emilio’s mind.

As Emilio was still an apprentice priest, he had no other talent.

His only unnecessary talent was having “a pretty appearance like a girl”, though he wanted to be masculine.

Unaware that he was a male, there were many times he was whispered words of love “from men”.

Although he sought masculinity, even when he shaved his hair and wore men’s clothes, that didn’t work either.

It was a good idea when Lucia first saw Emilio’s beauty and spoke with him.

[Fufufu... it’s alright. Because I’m expecting you after all...]

Whether she was aware of Emilio’s thoughts or not, Lucia smiled gently and caressed

Emilio...

Using a long “tail” that was 3 times longer than the girl-like Emilio.

Yes, the races that worshiped the Gods were not limited to only humans.

If they had intelligence and culture that respected Gods, the path of faith was open to everyone.

Unlike any others that served the Red Goddess, Lucia was a Lamia. A tribe stronger than humans with the upper body of a woman and lower body of a snake.

...With the appearance close to the dragons that were the strongest creatures of the world, it was a race with powerful magic and high intelligence.

Even if she didn't become a priestess and was stronger than human adventurers, it was a distinctive nature of Lamia to keep in touch with humans.

The Lamia tribe was an all-female race.

All members of the tribe were “women” and when they became older, they conceived a child with a member of another race.

And then, “Lamia's daughter” would be born after they received sperm from human males and laid their eggs.

They were that kind of tribe.

If Lamia did not keep in touch with other tribes, they would become extinct.

(In fact, according to travelers from the Northern Continent, Lamia who did not serve the Gods only had small settlements of mothers and daughters, forcing them to attack humans and were regarded as dangerous, it seemed they would be exterminated.)

That's why he knew that Lamia who associated with humans intimately sometimes accepted “practitioners” like Emilio.

...Though they had never accepted female practitioners for more than 1,000 years.

[Saa, come with me. Today is a special day. I will specially show you the sacred place today.]

Leaning towards Emilio, she affectionately whispered that to him and encouraged him.

[A, a sacred place...?]

[Ee, that's right. For us... and perhaps also for you. I sincerely welcome you. Please know that these words are not lies.]

She said those with a smile, making Emilio felt flustered, and started to move away.

As if attracted to it, Emilio walked beside Lucia.

—Look, who's that beside Lucia-sama?

—Maa, how dreamy. As expected of Lucia-sama.

—Ara, that way... aa, today's the day right.

Emilio's ears heard the voices of the Lamia who was living inside the settlement with strong stone pillars to support the ceiling that was several times taller than humans.

(They, they saw me...)

Feeling uncomfortable gazes looking at him, Emilio quietly walked beside Lucia.

The two of them reached their destination.

[We've arrived. This is our sacred place... a place to protect precious things.]

Lucia turned to face Emilio.

At first glance, it looked like a cave.

A natural cave that was made by excavating reddish rocks, not decorated like a shrine and no unnecessary decorations.

[This place... no, I see. I certainly feel that there's a strong power of flame.]

However, Emilio was certain that this was a sacred place.

He could feel the sacredness of Red Goddess leaking out of that place.

[...Ee, that's right. Well, let me show you.]

Looking at Emilio, Lucia pleasantly narrowed her eyes and urged him inside.

[Yes please.]

Unable to resist his curiosity, Emilio nodded and followed Lucia inside.

They entered a cave and shortly walked until they reached a clearing.

[...I see. This sure is important...]

At the back of the clearing, Emilio understood what Lucia said was important.

The important thing inside the cave.

One was a huge deep-crimson scale that was stabbed into the ground which made this sacred place into a holy ground, probably when the Red Goddess fought against the old Chaos God.

The other one was...

[Ee. This place is important for us... a place to protect our daughters.]

He said that while watching the mothers of the brethren.

In the hall, there were several Lamias coiling.

Each of them was holding a white egg the size of a human baby.

[It will take 3 more seasons for the daughters to hatch. And the mothers spend their time inside this hall most of the day. This place is always full of our Goddess' strength.]

While saying that, Lucia approached a young girl.

[...Aa, honored grandmother, is there something wrong?]

Noticing her approaching, the girl asked her grandmother while cradling a white egg.

[At ease, Lumia. I brought a guest today.]

[A guest... aa, welcome to our sanctuary. My name is Lumia.

Pleased to meet you, priest-dono.]

To Lucia's words, Lumia noticed Emilio and gracefully bowed.

[Well then Lumia, I think you should be the one to go today.]

[...Honored grandmother, it's fine. Instead...]

Lumia who guessed what Lucia was saying replied to her with a laugh.

[Ee, I know.]

Lucia also knew it and gently smiled.

[...Ano? That is?]

Emilio, who couldn't keep up with their conversation, asked Lucia.

[...You'll know soon.]

Looking at Emilio, Lucia kept smiling and went further back of the hall... and reached there.

[...Are? Why is there a door in such place?]

Emilio looked at it and tilted his head.

There was an out-of-place black door.

...Even though there were no decorations in the cave.

[...Fufu. This is the door to the land of God that our Goddess gave us 10 years ago.]

She gently laid her hand on the golden handle and turned it.

'Chirinchirin', the door opened.

[Uwa!? What is this place!?]

The moment the door opened, Emilio was surprised and unexpectedly shouted.

The Red Goddess' power leaking out from the door was intense... it was even more powerful than the Sacred Holy Temple.

It was so powerful that even Emilio who served the Red Goddess had never felt such intensity.

[No need to hesitate.]

Lucia said while remembering her situation 10 years ago when she first visited the place.

[This place is a genuine sacred place... and it is the place where they serve the food of the Kingdom of Gods.]

Usually when mothers were nurturing their children, they were unable to eat delicious treats, and so their mouth watered when seeing one.

The sacred place was unexpectedly vibrant.

[...There are a lot of strange people.]

Emilio honestly said while looking around at the strange sight.

In the sacred place, there were people who wear magical clothes that Emilio did not recognize, small fairies and dwarves, lion-headed therianthrope and cat-eared monsters, and people with strange long ears.

[Ee. This is a different world. And these people are people from our world through the door similar to ours.]

While she said so, she slithered to the table next to a priest serving the Gold God that started to come recently, and coiled around a seat.

[Well, come here.]

[Yes... excuse me, Gold priest-sama.]

[Umu.]

Unlike Emilio, the priest with manly bear-like body lightly greeted him while eating confectionaries.

[Welcome! Are you ready to order?]

While he was sitting down, a teenage girl with sheep horns approached them and asked for their order.

[Ee, I would like Scotch Eggs as usual. We want half of them to be soft-boiled while the other half hard-boiled. I want them with bread please.

And 20 of it for takeaway... are you okay with that, Emilio-sama?]

[A, yes... I leave it to you.]

[Yes, thank you very much! Here's your glass of water.]

After taking their order, the waitress gently place two transparent glass filled with water, bowed and retreated to the back.

[Isn't it unusual?]

Lucia asked Emilio who was taking in his surroundings.

[Ee... this place, isn't it a sanctuary of the Red Goddess? This looks like a shop that sells meals or something.]

While watching the strange decorations of the place, the customers were also strange.

Even though this was a sanctuary of the Red Goddess, only Emilio and his company served her.

There's no doubt that the one seating beside them was a priest of the Gold God judging from his clothes, and formm a different table there was an extraordinarily strong feeling from the four women who served the White God.

Wasn't this place the sanctuary of the Red Goddess?

[Yes, that's right. This is the sacred place of the Red Goddess. Not to mention... the Red Goddess also visited this place.]

As if to admonish Emilio, Lucia said those words.

10 years ago... for the first time since her birth, she was amazed from the bottom of her heart that day.

[Ee!? The honorable Goddess herself!?!]

He swallowed his words to refrain from asking her if she was joking.

In front of him was the pious high priest of the Goddess.

She wouldn't dare to tell such lies about the Red Goddess.

[Yes. After all, the food of this restaurant is very delicious... fortunately, the Goddess visited at midnight, so there's spare time.]

[Ye, yes... yes!]

To Lucia's words, Emilio rapidly nodded many times.

It was a great honor to meet the Goddess, but at the same time it was excessively heavy.

Even if he was told that they would meet the Goddess now, his mind was not prepared.

[Good. Well then... let's enjoy our meal.]

While Lucia said that, a middle aged man... the owner brought their food.

[Thank you for waiting. Here are your Scotch Eggs.]

The owner placed the plates in front of them.

On top of a white plate were leafy green vegetables, small Marmettes¹, and a meat dish. There was also a small jar filled with sauce as red as a Marmette.



One of the round meat dish was cut in half showing vivid white and yellow egg surrounded by minced meat while the rest were not cut and still intact.

There was also a bowl of piping hot light brown soup.

[A, looks delicious...]

Smelling the fragrance, Emilio swallowed his saliva.

[Later I'll bring your takeaway and Tequila when you're finished with your meal. Well then, please enjoy.]

And the owner left, leaving behind the food emitting delicious scent.

[Saa, let's eat our food.]

[Ye, yes...]

They started to eat their food.

[A, it's really delicious...]

First, Emilio bit into his bread and unintentionally leaked a voice.

Freshly baked bread, the crust was thin and hard but the white inside was soft and sweet.

It was a taste that he had never tried, but it was quite delicious.

[This is called bread... a grass named wheat was grounded into powder and baked into this.]

[Hee, so it's called wheat... it's different from corn huh.]

To Lucia's words, Emilio stared at the bread and said.

It was different from the usual food that Emilio ate; they usually ate steamed corn flour that was kneaded with water.

Even this alone was enough for Emilio to know that this was a different world.

[Saa, while bread is delicious, please eat the Scotch Eggs.]

[Yes, well then...]

Encouraged by Lucia, Emilio tried the Scotch Eggs.

With Lucia's advice, Emilio picked up the steaming Scotch Eggs, yellow and white, the grey minced meat with brown coloured crust similar to bread.

He carried the round Scotch Eggs to his mouth.

(Oo...)

Below the fragrant coating was the flavor of the meat.

Salt and spices were used to season the minced meat; the umami of the meat fat was combined with the sweetness of the chopped transparent vegetable mixed with the meat.

Also with it, the taste of boiled eggs.

The light flavor of slightly salted egg mixed with the meat's umami and became one.

[How is it?]

After confirming that Emilio had swallowed, Lucia deepened her smile and asked him.

[Yes! It's delicious. Really delicious.]

Emilio smiled at the question.

[Isn't it. However the taste of Scotch Eggs isn't just limited to that.

Next is chili sauce... please eat it with the red sauce.]

[Okay.]

Emilio tried it with the red sauce as recommended by Lucia and found that it was amazingly delicious.

(Uwa!? It's spicy!?)

Yes, the red sauce was spicy and sour.

It seemed that Togaran² was mixed with the acidity of Marmette, hot and spicy.

Just it alone was not delicious.

(However...!)

Emilio pierced the Scotch Eggs with his fork one by one, applying the sauce on each of them.

(It's delicious!)

Scotch Eggs were completed by adding the hot and sour taste of the red sauce to the simple taste of meat and eggs.

Just like the Lamias who were fascinated with the Scotch Eggs, Emilio devoured it.

[I'm glad. It seems that you like it...]

Feeling a little bit relieved, Lucia also ate her Scotch Eggs before it became cold.

And for a while, there was only the sound of the fork clinking with the plate.

[Well then, next is the "soft-boiled"...]

Eventually, the first half was finished... the one that was hard boiled, Lucia said to Emilio.

[Soft-boiled, huh... is it this one, the one that's not cut?]

To Lucia's words, Emilio's gaze was directed to the one that was still intact.

Since it was egg-shaped, it was also Scotch Eggs.

[Why is this one not cut?]

[You will understand when you see.]

Lucia softly answered Emilio's question.

[Well, let's eat. Cut it with a knife.]

[Okay.]

Encouraged by Lucia, Emilio gently pressed a silver knife to the Scotch Eggs... and applied force.

The Scotch Eggs was easily sliced... and the yolk flowed out.



[E? Uwa!? Thi, this...]

He was momentarily surprised... and understood its identity.

[Yes, for soft-boiled, the yolk has not solidified.]

So the owner did not cut it.

That was the answer to his question.

[Saa, let's eat... soft-boiled or hard-boiled, which one is more delicious is a difficult question that even we couldn't solve.]

She jokingly said that and encouraged Emilio to eat.

[That... I see. That is certainly a difficult question to answer.]

Emilio agreed with Lucia's words.

Although it's not solid, the egg was definitely exposed to heat, so the yolk was not raw.

The flavor of the egg was thicker and was a great combination with the meat.

It softened the hot and sour sauce used with the Scotch Eggs.

The dilemma was to either regard the egg yolk as a seasoning or to regard it as a part of the meat.

Certainly it was really hard to choose either one.

The two of them silently ate.

They finished eating the Scotch Eggs, even the spilled yolk and red sauce was wiped by the bread.

When even all the vegetables were eaten... their meal was finished.

[Fuu... it was very delicious.]

[That's right... I'm glad that you like it.]

Lucia was smiling so widely that her eyes became narrower.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. Here's your takeaway of Scotch Eggs.]

Then the owner came bringing a brown paper bag containing Scotch Eggs and a glass bottle of alcohol.

[Maa, thank you very much... as always, it's really delicious.]

They took the Scotch Eggs and alcohol... while receiving the souvenirs for those who couldn't visit, Lucia gently handed the owner some silver coins.

[Thank you very much for you patronage.]

The owner received the coins and pocketed them after counting that it was the correct amount and said his gratitude.

[Yes. Well then... let's go back, Emilio-sama.]

[Okay.]

Both of them left the restaurant with great satisfaction.

[[[[[Welcome back, Lucia-sama.]]]]]

The moment they returned to the cave, they were surrounded by Lamias carrying their eggs.

Their eyes were zeroed on the paper bag that Lucia was carrying.

[[Fufu...]]

Lucia and Emilio smiled at their actions.

Thus, Emilio's pursuit of knowledge... the first day he spent with Lucia and her 10 granddaughters and their "daughters", ended calmly.

1. Marmette – tomato
2. Togaran – chili

CHAPTER 43

SALT-GRILLED SANMA



TN: Ah, sanma. A classic Japanese food during autumn. One of my favourite fish.

Being lit by the light of full moon, Koheji looked around the area quietly.

(Where, is it here, it's about to arrive...)

In Koheji's ears, the sound of wind was mixed with that sound.

AAAAAAAAAAAAA...

Sadly, the voice of resentment against the world, to his ears faintly reminded him of the rustling of clothes.

(There's no mistake. Until now, the lost people had become ghosts...)

He became frightened when he remembered the first time he encountered those things.

Though they were somewhat beautiful, those cursed beings had the appearance of a woman with empty eye sockets.

It happened to one or two person in a few years, the travellers who went missing in this highway would appear as ghosts.

However, he didn't think that it was a big problem.

To peddlers who did not have enough money to hire a group of escorts, the danger to life was inherent.

According to the gossips he could glean at bars, there was a pack of wolves residing near a part of the highway, one part of the highway was safe because adventurers destroyed a nest of goblins, and it seemed that a married pair of horrible man-eating ogres was sighted near the highway, those kinds of dangerous tales.

Compared to that, of course there's at least one person that's unlucky.

Koheji did not think that he was particularly unlucky, and decided to travel the road.

(Pro, probably... during the night of full moon...)

He looked up to the sky. On the large expanse of darkness... the full moon shining on the heaven was said to strengthen the power of death.

Even at his small hometown, it was normal for an apprentice priest to sleep in a graveyard during full moon night.

Because the strong power of full moon had the magical power to change corpses into terrible undeads.

(Don't tell me it's a ghost... it's such a dreadful thing...)

Being frightened by the possibility of a ghost appearing, his body started to tremble.

When he was a kid, he heard that a traveler died near the entrance of his hometown and decided to see it with other people. When people became ghosts, they became an “indifferent” entity.

He slipped down a cliff to his death and standing idly there with a transparent body.

It was so creepy that he thought that it was scary, but after his grandmother repeatedly bashed extra-large fist on him while giving him a lecture, the neighborhood’s priestess was called to banish the ghost.

However, the ghost he saw some time ago was different. It was another thing... a monster.

Based from the dress, it seemed that she was a daughter of an aristocrat that died around there during wartime when humans and demons were fighting fiercely for territories.

Indeed, for several decades or centuries, with their grudge against the world keep building up, only the power of senior silver ranked priest or priestess could cleanse them.

For Koheji who was a mere peddler, not only was he an amateur in sword-wielding, he had no training in magic.

(A, anything is fine. That guy will arrive later... what is that!?)

Under the moonlight, Koheji who looked around desperately noticed it.

A black door with a picture of a cat.

(Why in a place like this... wait, it’s going to disappear!?)

Almost at the same time the full moon reaching its peak on the sky, the door’s becoming more transparent.

It was about to disappear.

(Oh crap!?)

If he did not enter the door now, surely he would be cursed by a ghost before morning arrived.

Following his intuition, Koheji immediately ran and opened the door.

‘Chirinchirin’, at the same time the bell rang, he jumped inside and closed the door.

While the door closed with a bang, Koheji’s lower body immediately became weaker and he sat down.

[Am, am I saved?]

He was glad that the floor was not made of rough stone, it was a wooden floor made by human hands.

He did not know where this is.

Although it was pitch black, certainly there were signs that it was lived in with no presence of a ghost.

That was enough for now.

Koheji sighed in relief and leaned back on the door.

At the same time he thought he was saved, his fatigue hit his body and his waist gave out.

Shortly afterwards, Koheji began to snore and the sound echoed in “otherworld dining hall”.

[...Who is this?]

For this restaurant, Sunday was the only fixed holiday.

At the morning, the owner who slowly came down to the restaurant later than usual noticed a snoring young man.

[...Maybe he found a door during the middle of the night and got stuck...?]

Sturdy clothes for mountain climbing... Japanese-like clothes for protection and a small katana hanging from his waist, he reminded the owner of warring states era and period drama.

Yesterday, after giving beef stew to the last customer and the employee returning home... it should be nearing midnight.

It seemed that the door disappeared from that world around 12 a.m., so maybe he entered during that slight gap.

[...Nn? Is it morning...?]

While he was thinking such, the young man who was noticed that the surroundings were bright began to wake up.

[It seemed that it's strangely bright somehow... un?]

The man who was still half-asleep looked at the owner and tilted his head curiously.

And for the owner,

[...Welcome to the Western restaurant Nekoya.]

For the time being, he decided to treat him as a customer and greeted him slowly.

Then, after a while,

(...Otherworld dining hall, huh...)

While drinking the ice cold water handed to him from the owner who was probably 10 years older than him, Koheji pondered about the situation.

From what he was told, the place where he got lost in was a different world restaurant that opened once in 7 days.

It was such a mysterious story, but this restaurant had been around for 50 years and it seemed that it started to appear at the other world around 30 years ago.

Then when Koheji told his story... he spoke about the terrible ghost he encountered, he was surprised that undeads did not exist in the other world.

And he said that.

—It seemed to be a lot of trouble.

While it was unfortunate that the food he could make today was limited, if he didn't mind, please eat something.

As he was told so, Koheji's belly grumbled.

When he thought about it, he was running for his life last night and had not eaten anything yet in the morning.

It was reasonable to get hungry.

So Koheji decided to take advantage of the owner's favour.

Of course, since the owner was involved in business, such a thing couldn't be free.

Fortunately when in terms of money, dozens of gold and silver coins were stored in his clothing and he always carried it around with him.

He told the owner that he was fine with it and paid a silver coin to become an official customer of the restaurant.

Thus,

[Sorry to keep you waiting. It's salt-grilled sanma. For miso soup, the ingredients are radish and fried tofu.]

Before Koheji, other world food was placed.

[Somehow it looks like a luxury, master.]

Seeing the food lined up before him, he said such honestly.

It was surprisingly different from the food of an ordinary restaurant that Koheji knew... its luxury suited the aristocracy.

The white rice piled in a small bowl shined under the light from the ceiling, and the piping hot brown soup emitted a tantalizing scent.

Yellow salted vegetables were served in a small plate.

And on the middle was a grilled silver-black fish similar to a sword with browned skin due to fire.



The owner said that this was a salt-grilled fish named “sanma”.

Placed on the side of the plate was something resembling white snow and green fruit.

[I appreciate it. Please eat it with the sauce in the red bottle.

The rice and miso soup are complimentary, so you can have refills. Please enjoy.]

The owner turned back to the kitchen for cleaning up.

Koheji was left alone.

[Well, let’s eat...]

He couldn’t endure his appetite anymore seeing the steaming food in front of him; he picked up a pair of chopsticks and started eating.

[First off... oo, tasty.]

He picked up the bowl of brown soup and drank it.

The salty soup hit the empty stomach of the exhausted Koheji.

The ingredients were chopped and were left to stew in the soup, with something like a shredded light coloured grain mixed inside.

Both the ingredients sucked in plenty of the soup and it was irresistible to taste the soup along with the original taste of the ingredients.

In spite of its unexpected nature, Koheji reached for the white rice.

In this time of the year, rice was probably just harvested in the Western Continent.

For it to be here... he was surprised.

(Why... why is this thing “sweet”!?)

The otherworld rice was slightly sweet.

In addition, it was so soft that it was incomparable to the rice of Western Continent, and it got sweeter the more he chewed.

It was already a treat with this rice and soup.

With just the soup, Koheji could eat several bowls of rice.

[Owner, refill for soup and rice please!]

[Yes, yes. Please wait a moment.]

In response to the request, the owner immediately brought the refill.

Immediately Koheji noticed.

He had not eaten the fish yet.

Koheji had never seen this type of fish before.

It was sliced with a knife in several places, a long silver fish with brown marks.

From the smell of grease, the fish contained plenty of fat.

(By any chance...)

Koheji recalled something, swallowed his spit and stretched his chopsticks towards it.

He started where the fish was sliced and the meat was easily separated from the bone.

His chopsticks pinched the meat of a white fish.

It conveyed in his mouth... Koheji was certain with its taste.

(There's no mistake! It's a “salt water fish”!)

Yes, the fish that the owner cooked was a “salt water fish” that was precious in his

hometown that was located at the mountains.

The fish was a wonderful thing with few bones and plenty fat. The taste was remarkably different from the river fish that could be found at the mountains.

Besides, the method of cooking was better, although the fish was securely grilled with fire, it did not lose its moisture and was still soft.

The browned skin was fragrant, which was also delicious.

(This is really delicious!)

He then started to eat his rice a second time.

He decided to alternate between rice and fish.

Before he ate half of his fish, he had already finished his bowl of rice.

[Owner, another serving!]

[Okay... aa, customer, Sanma is particularly delicious if you eat it if you squeeze the Sudachi² on it and eat it with grated radish. Also, you could dribble some soy sauce on it.]

The owner brought back a new bowl of rice and advised Koheji on how to make the fish more delicious.

[Oh, is that so?]

Koheji decided to obediently follow the owner's suggestion.

He squeezed the juice of the fruit and put the grated vegetable on top.

He picked up the red bottle and gently tilted it.

Black sauce dribbled out from the bottle.

It slowly dyed the white vegetable black and spread over the fish.

[Then...]

Once again, Koheji extended his chopsticks.

He slowly lifted it to his mouth and lost his words.

(What is this!? It's even more delicious than before!?)

The fish... sanma had plenty of fat and fragrant skin.

The sweetness of grated radish, the refreshing and bitter taste of Sudachi, and above all the saltiness and distinct flavor of shoyu.

The moment all three were added, sanma became a different thing.

Delicious. It was just too delicious.

No other impressions came up, Koheji continued to fiercely eat sanma with rice.

(1 silver coin is too cheap for this...)

It was not an exaggeration to say that this was the most delicious food he had ever eaten in his life.

He finished it in a blink of eye.

[...Fuu. I finished it.]

After finishing the salted vegetable and soup, he put down his chopsticks.

With his belly filled, he felt his fear yesterday was diminishing.

[Ou, owner, I've been in your care! I put the money on the table!]

Feeling gratitude, he put the silver coin on the table.

[Ah! Just wait a moment!]

The owner came out while shouting in panic at Koheji who was heading out.

In his hand was a brown paper bag.

He said this to Koheji.

[Please take this. It's rice ball. The ingredients are plum, kelp and salt. There's also pickles inside, please eat this for lunch.]



[...Are you sure?]

Koheji asked again after unexpectedly receiving the most gracious interaction.

Though he received the lunch box thankfully, it along with the sanma was worth more than one silver coin.

[Yeah well, the total is 1,000 yen... 1 silver coin is the total for both.]

However, it seemed that that was not the case for the owner.

[...I understand. Thank you very much.]

[Okay. Please visit again. Next time on Saturday if possible.]

They cheerfully said goodbye.

When Koheji opened the door, clear autumn sky greeted him.

[...It seems that only half a day had passed.]

Being chased by a ghost, feeling that he would definitely die, seeking refuge and had a wonderful breakfast at the other world.

All of that happened in only half a day.

And now, Koheji was still alive with full belly.

It was a lucky life event in midst of misfortune.

[...O, it's still here. That's good.]

Naturally, the ghost had no interest in Koheji's luggage.

He recovered his baggage that he released in order to escape yesterday.

[Well then, I have to reach the city before sunset.]

He would be busy when he reached there.

Even if he had to do business tomorrow, he had to report the existence of the ghost to the temple.

As the temple regarded all undeads as enemies that must be exterminated, when they knew the terrible existence that only appeared during the night of full moon, surely it would be banished and the road would be safe once again.

People wouldn't die anymore when they camped during full moon night.

(Moreover, it may be good to be there soon.)

For a person that traveled for merchandise and money, he didn't know what might come next.

But someday, when he passed this road, it would be nice to visit the restaurant as a normal customer.

Koheji decided so, while swallowing his saliva.

1. Sanma – Pacific Saury



2. Sudachi – Sudachi is a small, round, green, Peruvian and Japanese citrus fruit that is a specialty of Piura in Peru and Tokushima Prefecture in Japan. It is a sour citrus, not eaten as fruit, but used as food flavoring in place of lemon or lime. I usually use lemon on Sanma though.



CHAPTER 44

APPLE PIE



The last city of elves, the Forest Capital, which tried to take over the world with its powerful magic once.

Its surroundings were covered with lush forests.

The beginning of this forest started on a faraway era even for elves that could live for hundreds years

The era when mountains were scrapped off, lakes were dried up, wastelands as far as one could see as forests were burned to ashes during the fight of supremacy between 7 colours.

It was said that the elves lived and searched for food in this forest that managed to remain after the intense battle.

Over thousands of years, the rich forest kept protecting the elves, simultaneously they cultivated wisdom so that they did not kill the sea of large trees.

Knowing the right way to Forest Capital... it took about half a month to follow the magic signpost secretly carved by the elves while it spanned a lifetime for those who were lost, the Forest Capital was able to rival a country.

For humans, it was feared as the “devil forest” as those who entered couldn’t come out, not to mention the countless beasts, plants and therianthropes who settled in this large ocean of trees.

However, for those who actually settled there and lived with the grace of the forest, this forest had the richness suitable to be called a capital.

The trees which continued to live after the previous era of dragons had their own magical power from the earth, and imparted the richness of common sense to the earth.

In addition, the elves who were the champions of the forest continued to increase their wealth of magical knowledge.

Its richness attracted countless animals and monsters, along with therianthropes who preferred living in the wild.

While that vast sea of trees was the city of elves, it was also the largest territory of therianthropes in the Eastern Continent.

They never crippled the elves who were too troublesome to be turned into enemies (the tribes that did turn them to enemies never survived) though by no means they revealed themselves, while the elves did not oppose the therianthropes and treated them as if they didn’t exist.

Due to the forest being rich, the tribes rarely quarreled between each other and their villages were scattered inside the forest.

It was a certain autumn day when two therianthrope girls Lichi and Toto found it.

[Nee, Toto, strange, there.]

Lichi who was carrying a bag weaved from vines that was stuffed full with Azar¹ fruit peered into a tree’s hollow cavity that was big enough to fit 2 person said that.

[Un. It's strange. What is this?]

Toto who looked into the cavity confirmed it with a nod.

For many years, there was a black board that they couldn't understand inside the cavity of a large tree that didn't bear delicious sweet and sour Azar fruit.

During this season, the tribe that Lichi and Toto belonged to was particularly busy.

Even if this rich forest produced food, winter was approaching.

In order to survive the cold season, even children like Lichi must gather food during autumn.

Lichi's tribesmen were dexterous though they were not strong as they didn't like to fight.

In order not to fight over food, it was necessary to be early.

Lichi was petite with light brown fur covering her hands and feet and had large tail that was half of her height and pointed upwards.

They didn't eat meat or fish, surviving by eating tree nuts, flower seeds, fruits etc.

As fruits like Azar fruit didn't have long shelf life, they were eaten during autumn.

Nuts and seeds which rarely decay were stored in the center of the village which used to be ruins left by olden elves.

They lived in such a way.

[Yesterday, that thing, not there.]

[Un. Not there.]

Toto touched the board while nodding towards Lichi.

There was a painting of animal on it, it was smooth but there was no mistake that it was made of wood.

It somewhat resembled the wall of the ruins that was the center of the village.

[Something, protruding.]

On the door, there was a golden stone that was similar to those found in the ruins, Toto nonchalantly grasped it.

[A, this, can turn.]

With little effort, she turned the handle.

‘Chirinchirin’

With the sound of bell, the board moved.

[[Kyaa!?!]]

They were surprised by the loud noise and jumped out of the cavity.

Looking into the dreadful hollow, there was a “hole” where the board was.

[What is this?]

[What is it?]

A bright hole opened in the place where the board was.

Lichi and Toto unexpectedly inspected it.

[[Kyaa!?!]]

Their balance became off and they fell inside.

At that moment, their figure disappeared while the door closed at the same time.

It was the moment the two therianthrope children became customers of “otherworld dining hall”.

[A, wel...come?]

Aletta who greeted the customers as usual blinked a couple of times when they literally tumbled into the restaurant.

Fur covering their arms, feet, breasts and other key points, tails half as tall as them and not wearing any clothes; it was an unknown race to Aletta.

A bag knitted from vines with red Azar fruits that spilled from within.

That's it.

It was a common occurrence that customers who were not humans or demons visited the restaurant.

The problem was,

[Etto, here, where?]

[I don't know. Where?]

New customers who seemed to be children were talking to each other while their faces were still planted on the floor.

[Etto, what should I do in this case...]

The door probably didn't judge whether the customer was an adult or a child.

Not only was Aletta unfamiliar with their race, they were also children.

She didn't know how to handle it. She had worked here only for half a year.

It was such a time.

[Welcome to Western restaurant Nekoya.]

The owner came out while carrying food.

He helped both of them to stand up.

[Thanks-!]

[Nee, here, where? What is Western restaurant Nekoya?]

[Aa, here, I sell food to customers like you two.]

When Toto asked the owner, he replied cheerfully with a tone that matched the child's.

[Food?]

[Aa... that's right, since you're a customer, how about an apple pie? Since it's your first time, you don't need to pay.]

He nodded to Lichi and recommended a food.

It was based on the bags full of ripe apples that the two children carried.

In other words, he judged that they could eat apples.

[Apple pie? What is that, is it delicious?]

[It's delicious. Sweet apples... because there're plenty of Azar fruits.]

[Azar fruit! It's sweet?]

[Give me, give me! Apple pie, give me!]

Once Lichi and Toto heard that it's sweet, they wanted it.

[Alright, wait a moment. See, sit down over there.]

[[Un!]]

The owner urged the children to sit on one of the tables.

While they rushed there, they curiously looked around the restaurant.

[...That door, sometimes it brought children here.]

After the series of interactions, the owner said that to Aletta.

According to the stories he heard from customers, the door abruptly appeared in mostly strange places.

At that time, it was quite common for children to find the door and visited.

Also, if it's an adult, they hesitated to enter, but children went through quite easily.

As a result, sometimes only children came.

[Maa, it's not surprising if first time customers happen to be children.]

[Yes, I understand.]

[Ou, that's good.]

He cheerfully laughed at Aletta who obediently nodded and returned back to the kitchen.

Aletta would also follow it. To serve food to new customers.

Then,

[Sorry to keep you waiting! I brought your apple pie!]

It was placed before Lichi and Toto.

[This, Azar fruit?]

[It's neither red nor white? This?]

They curiously tilted their head.

In spite that it was Azar fruit in front of them, neither its red skin nor the white flesh was visible.

It was a bright earthen colour, being illuminated by light, it certainly looked delicious, but it didn't seem like Azar fruit.



[Yes. This is a confectionary made by baking Azar fruit... it's sweet and sour, it's really delicious.]

Aletta carefully explained to the two while remembering the taste of apple pie that she had eaten before.

[Is that so?]

[...A, it's true, it smells like Azar fruit.]

To Aletta's words, Litchi scratched her nape while Toto brought it near her nose to smell it.

Certainly there was a scent of Azar fruit from the apple pie.

[Nee, nee, let's eat! Looks delicious!]

[Un, thanks for bringing it, horned onee-chan!]

Toto urged while Lichi concentrated on the pie.

Aletta left the table.

They gripped their apple pie with their hands.

[A, no!? It's crumbling!]

[It sure is hard to eat.]

The apple pie served to them was brittle.

When they lifted it, the outer crust cracked a little while the inside tumbled down.

However, there was no hindrance in eating it.

They opened their mouths widely and chomped on the apple pie.

[[!!!!!!??????]]

Their tails pointed straight while their eyes widened.

They were rigid for a while, after that.

[[Delicious!]]

They declared it to be delicious loudly.

It was more delicious than they had ever eaten.

The crust easily crumbled inside their mouth.

Inside it, the juice of Azar fruit was mixed with sweet honey.

The taste mingled with the crisp fragrant crust and sweetly spread inside their mouth.

However, the real thing was after that.

Sweet Azar fruit that was contained inside the “apple pie”.

It was sweeter and softer than any Azar fruit that they had eaten, yet a bit of sourness was left behind, fascinating the both of them.

Savoury, sweet and crisp skin along with sweet and sour tender content.

When both were eaten at the same time, apple pie was complete.

Then, they became silent.

Silently, they savoured the apple pie.

Little by little, eating it carefully so that it didn't spill.

After fully enjoying the taste in their mouth, they swallowed it.

However, in spite of their efforts, the apple pie was finished quickly.

[[Haa~]]

They felt half satisfied and half sorry, and exhaled simultaneously.

[It's delicious.]

[Un. It's delicious.]

They also said that at the same time.

And the two returned back to the tree cavity.

[It's delicious.]

[Un! Let's go there again!]

After they ate, they asked what kind of place was otherworld dining hall.

A magical place that was open once in 7 days.

They talked with various customers that came from various places to eat otherworld cuisine.

[Money, we have to earn!]

[Un! You're right! Lots of it!]

Something called "money" was needed to eat that food.

When they were showed what it looked like, it was a flat round stone that could be found at the ruins in their village.

In the olden days, there were plenty of it in the village, but since it couldn't be eaten, the village people thought that it was useless and threw it away.

[But that, it was white right? The ones that's found at the village are yellow, is it alright?]

[Isn't it fine? It looks similar!]

They returned to the village while discussing it.

They didn't know.

The "money" that they were talking about was gold coins that were left behind by the elves that used to study historic ruins.

With that one thing, everyone in the village became addicted to apple pie.

That was a while before the story of a special food called "apple pie" spread in a certain therianthrope village.

CHAPTER 45

BARBECUE



Pierce with bamboo skewers.

Puncture it intently.

Pierce the meat and vegetables that were cut in large pieces with the right hand that was wearing vinyl gloves.

[A, ano master... what are you doing?]

A voice asked the owner

[N?... A, it's for tomorrow's sale.]

Apparently it was already the time Aletta arrived before he noticed it.

Noticing that, the owner turned towards Aletta.

[Tomorrow? Isn't it your day off?]

[A, no, no. It's not for the restaurant, it's for a stall at the autumn festival.]

The owner answered the confused Aletta, waving his hand lightly.

Yes, tomorrow at Sunday there was an autumn festival held at the local shrine.

Everyone in the shopping district including shopkeepers was supposed to create a stall as part of their help.

Western restaurant Nekoya was one of the restaurants in the district.

Half of the stores in the district were restaurants, the remaining half were a butcher, a greengrocer, a fish shop and other foodstuffs that supplied the restaurants.

For the neighborhood offices, because there were hardly any companies that had employee cafeteria, over 1,000 guests gathered in this shopping district where delicious food were served for their lunch break.

As this had continued for a long time, this happened.

But it's not easy.

After all, though they expected customers to some extent every day, based on the location pattern, the majority of the customers were regulars.

If one of the stores did not show up for the festival, there would be a loss for less than a year.

Because of that, for many years, restaurants which “survived” in this neighborhood had good reputations including Nekoya.

Although there were various kind of food served, it required skill to be called “the most delicious in the shopping district”.

For ordinary sales, all restaurants in the district were not “cannibalistic” since the types of food served were different, but there was one exception.

It was during the autumn festival that was held at the local shrine each year.

The shops at the shopping district were in charge of opening small festival at the local shrine each year.

...During the short period of 1 day, they competed on selling food face to face.

Moreover, the customers decided what to eat after seeing the sale of almost all the stalls.

Even if they won or lost, they obtained nothing, but it was human's nature to think that it was extremely mortifying if they lost.

That's why every store in the district strived to make a stand that could stand above other "rivals" every year.

If you restrained the price to the extent that it didn't make a deficit, the only thing left was how to make a dish that could draw customers.

(Recently, thanks to many years of rivalry, customers are beginning to come in an extent that it's unlikely to be called a modest festival of a local shrine.

Every year, the town magazine makes it a special feature.)

Even for Nekoya which was one of the best veterans in the shopping district, the owner must exert his skill to the utmost every year for the food stall.

And the dish selected by the owner this year was...

[I choose to sell Kushiyaki¹ for the food stall... well, it's a barbecue.]



The owner said while showing the meat and vegetables pierced by bamboo skewers.

[Barbecue...?]

[Ou, yesterday I had a trial run during working hours, but it had promising reputation. The sauce is also homemade.]

The owner answered.

Last year, the owner was one step behind the specialty meat dish of Chinese restaurant “Emi Ryuu” where he worked at back when he was in high school, but this year he was confident.

On one side there was steam rising from meat and vegetables grilled with charcoal, it was matched with the smell of seafood grilled using a different iron plate.

The owner had plenty motivation.

[Ma, I’ll also give it to you, so look forward to it. As expected, it’s too heavy for breakfast so wait until dinner.]

The owner said that, thinking that they should taste test the food.

[Yes! I look forward to it!]

If the owner said it, surely it’s delicious.

Feeling confident, Aletta nodded strongly.

During daytime, the restaurant was bustling with visiting customers.

The door leading to otherworld dining hall was usually located at remote places.

If they went out at sunset, surely they would return when the moon was out.

It was normal to head out at daytime, because beasts, monsters and undeads usually were more active during the night.

For customers of otherworld dining hall, usually they lived near the door, or in Halflings' cases camped near the door.

At evening, it was a less busy time compared to noon.

The tables were occupied by two groups.

[Oo! Whiskey is the best alcohol after all!]



[Ou! It's especially delicious with this fried shellfish!]



Two dwarf craftsmen, Gard and Guilem, drank whiskey as if it was water.

[Hee~, I don't understand. Shochu is the best alcohol in this restaurant.]



[That's right. Even though they're equally strong, this one is better. As expected.]

They were an ogre couple, Tatsuji and Otor, who joined the two dwarves.

[Is that so? I think wine is the best alcohol here.]

[I agree. Both this world's red and white wines are delicious.]



The ones who drank wine were the pale-faced immortal vampires of darkness, Romero and Julietta.

[Ee? For me it's brandy though. Well, I heard from the rumors that dwarves can make whiskey right?

Then make a brandy. If you can make the real thing, then Celestine-sama can drink it with confectionaries at the Light Temple.]



It was the red-haired priestess Carlotta who served the God of Light; she was enjoying her pound cake and brandy by herself after her boss and colleagues left before evening.



Yes, because of their circumstances, they were “drunkards” who had no problem even if they return at night.

...If they met at their world, this combination would kill each other, but they did not fight with each other in this restaurant.

That's why after they finished eating their respective "favourite", they moved their tables and drank alcohol with light snacks.

[Otto, it's the waitress. Indeed, it's time for dinner.]

[O, isn't that Kushiyaki? ...Looks delicious.]

Tatsuji who saw Aletta eating a single skewer on an empty seat on the corner said that to Otoro.

According to the owner who was a resident of another world, what was called "Makanai²" seemed to be a dish not on the menu and not served to customers.

Every time he saw the demon waitress eating deliciously, he often asked for it before, but the owner always refused saying "I'm sorry, it's not a dish served to customers".

[Still... it looks delicious today too...]

[It seems delicious paired with alcohol.]

The two dwarves were sensitive to "signs of delicacy" and swallowed their spit.

Especially when they couldn't eat it.

[Fumu... seafood and vegetable, huh.]

[It seemed to fit well with wine.]

The two vampires seemed to remember the taste of seafood with white wine and licked their lips.

[U~mu, I don't know whether it's better than meat or not. Because I don't really eat seafood, so I don't know the taste well.]

Carlotta was a bit slow in her reaction.

Without being concerned of the gazes upon her, Aletta continued to eat.

(I have to finish it before it cools down...)

It was seafood and vegetable skewer that was planned to be sold at the stall.

First was the shellfish called scallop, next was the yellow grain called corn, squid, a mushroom called eringi³, and rounded shrimp.



Seafood and vegetables that were delicious during summer and autumn were alternatively stabbed with a skewer and grilled, with just shoyu as sauce.

For something to be sold, “meat” had a strong taste, this one though had simple taste.

[The God that bless demon race, I appreciate that I was given food to eat today.]

After she prayed, Aletta lifted the skewer.

When it neared her mouth, she could appreciate the strong scent of the skewer.

A unique scent of fresh seafood and burnt shoyu.

She breathed the scent deeply.

With just its fragrance, her mouth was overflowing with saliva.

She swallowed her saliva and stuffed her cheeks with the food.

(N! ...Delicious!)

While the freshly grilled skewer was still hot, Aletta would enjoy its taste.

The first thing she ate was the taste of shellfish smeared with shoyu.

Usually it was coated and deep-fried, but it was also delicious when grilled with shoyu.

Every time she chewed, the shellfish broke and its juice that contained plenty of its taste spread inside her mouth.

The oversized shellfish was already a feast on its own.

But the skewer was not finished yet.

The sweet corn, the chewy squid, the mushroom smeared with shoyu, and at last was the shrimp.

Indeed, it was because of the simple seasoning of only shoyu that she was able to alternatively savour the true taste of seafood and vegetables.

Aletta finished the skewer with considerable volume in a blink of eye.

(It's delicious, but... it's not enough!)

Its taste stimulated her appetite and Aletta felt it strongly.

She wanted to eat more.

It was such a moment.

[Hoi. I brought the meat one. It's hot so be careful.]

As he said so, the owner placed another plate.

[Is that ok!?!]

[Of course. Just one is not enough, and I intended to have you taste both of them from the start.]

The owner nodded with a laugh.

[Yes! Thank you very much!]

To answer it, Aletta reached for the skewer brought by the owner.

(A... this, the sauce is delicious!)

At that instant, Aletta could taste the sauce.

It's sweet, hot and sour.

It contained three flavours at the same time... a sauce with strong flavor.

The taste spread inside her mouth.

The meat that absorbed the strong sauce... was beef.



It was so soft since the owner carefully prepared it, at the same time it still contained plenty of meat juice with strong meat flavor, not losing to the sauce.

Furthermore, the vegetables sandwiched between the meats were onions and potatoes.

With a crunchy sound, the pungent onion neutralizes the sauce's taste, while the potatoes without its skin were boiled for a while before grilling and crumbled inside her mouth.

Both were eaten in between the meat... after that she ate the second and third meat deliciously.

Thanks to the strong flavor that she had just eaten, Aletta was satisfied.

She finished eating it in an instant. It was so delicious.

[So, how was it? Is it delicious?]

[Yes! It's really tasty!]

Aletta nodded with a smile to the owner's question.

She agreed from the bottom of her heart.

If it's this delicious, she would gladly buy it.

[I see, I see... well then. If that's the case then it's definitely selling tomorrow.]

The owner felt a little relieved from those words.

...They didn't notice. There was a group eavesdropping on their conversation.

[Ou! Owner, that, is it for sale!?!]

[E!? A, maa, that's right.]

When he was suddenly asked by the big male ogre, the owner nodded while feeling surprised.

He answered Tatsuji's question without knowing why, but the eyes of all the members of that group gleamed.

(Are? Did I... make a mistake?)

Immediately he got a bad feeling.

[Ou, if that's so then give me those skewers! 5 of the seafood skewers for me!]

[5 meat skewers for me! As soon as possible!]

[10 each for me! Also add a bottle of shochu!]

[This thing should match well with shochu!]

[Well then, 1 each for us too.]

[Without Galeo⁴ please.]

[A, meat for me please. For liquor, it seems that beer is more suitable than brandy, so that too please.]



He received orders from all of them.

[E!? A, that... I understand.]

The owner nodded, though he was troubled by the orders.

Originally, he made a lot since he was planning to sell it.

He couldn't say that he couldn't sell it to otherworld customers.

...After that the skewers that reached to three figures were flattened and it would take until midnight to remake the preliminary preparations, but that's another story

-
1. **Kushiyaki**(串焼き) is a formal term that encompasses both poultry and non-poultry items, skewered and grilled.
 2. マカナイ – I don't know what this means. Employee meal maybe?
 3. Eringi – King oyster mushroom
 4. Galeo – garlic

CHAPTER 46

CREAM STEW



‘Chirinchirin’, the half-elf magic warrior, Melissa, was thinking when she heard the bell sound.

(A, today’s the last day I’m hearing this.)

It was the end of the adventurer party that Melissa shared her pain and joy with; it had been 10 years since she found this restaurant.

10 years had passed in a flash for Melissa who turned 60 this year, but it seemed that it was long enough for “humans”.

(It was fun when I just found this restaurant...)

A ruin not far from the city that used to be a stronghold, their party challenged it without knowing that its treasure had been robbed long ago.

When they finally reached the deepest part of the ruins after killing the beasts and weak lonely monsters that settled there, they found that “door”.

A magical door that appeared once in 7 days... a door to otherworld dining hall.

A restaurant of another world that served delicious food that Melissa had never seen, heard and, of course, ate before. She was captivated.

She could not go here every time, but she always felt like she's here when something happened.

When her job succeeded and her purse was satisfied.

When she returned back to the stronghold after a couple of months of adventure.

When her friends died and she finished mourning.

When she taught the secret of the party to new colleagues who joined afterwards.

...And when the warrior leader and party's wizard got married and it was decided to dissolve the party.

7 days ago when Melissa's party decided to dissolve, a farewell party was held.

Her friends who got married and retired back to their hometown decided to start a business with the money accumulated in their adventurer life so far, while some decided to join another party and scattered.

For Melissa who was a magic warrior, she was not an exception. Her hometown that she had not visited for 10 years... the elven Forest Capital was close, but she decided to return to a human town.

In order to meet her mother that probably didn't change.

Melissa was a half-elf...

However, she was not a changeling. She was a rare case with a "human father" and "elven mother".

When her father was young, it seemed that he was a veteran mercenary soldier who fought a terrible demon party with a single spear and experienced a number of pandemonium.

When he went to the forest due to his curiosity, he accidentally helped her mother who was almost enslaved by a demon and got to know each other... they eventually got married.

When he was young, he had relationships with a lot of women that could rival Alexander until he got married, her mother laughed at that story.

...When Melissa was 10 years old, her father who had bald head and white beard at that time passed away.

Melissa was the youngest daughter who was born late in their marriage.

Melissa's mother who decided not to be in another relationship with another man loved Melissa, the youngest daughter, very much.

Along with the magic that her mother taught, her father taught the way of spear to all his children ranging from her oldest brother that was 50 years older than her to Melissa herself, it was extremely useful in adventuring.

And when Melissa reached 50 years old and said that she wanted to become an adventurer, she was sent off with a smile.

That's why when her party decided to break up, she decided to return home.

When she came back to her hometown, she would help her mother who was an innkeeper of their family's house which was converted to an inn.

In truth, she had decided to leave the next day after the last feast.

Nevertheless, she decided to stay for another 7 days due to the owner's words.

Yes, the owner who reminded her of her father told her this at the farewell feast.

—Are you returning back to your hometown?... If so, could you delay for another week, I mean 7 days before returning home?

As a farewell gift, I'll make a special menu for you instead of the usual fare.

He reminded her of her father, a laughing old man with gray hair.

Special menu of otherworld dining hall.

She became anxious and stayed for another 7 days before visiting the otherworld dining hall.

[Yo, you came. Welcome.]

As usual, when the restaurant's customers were trickling down, the owner greeted Melissa with a smile.

[Ee. Thank you for inviting me today.]

She replied calmly and went to her usual seat.

[Well, what will you serve today?]

To Melissa's question, the owner deepened his smile and said.

[Ou. Today is... cream stew. First of all, it's without meat.]

[Hee~ ... I see, you're making cream stew today.]

Melissa understood why he called it a special menu.

Meatless cream stew.

It's what Melissa usually ordered.

As Melissa was raised by her elven mother, she didn't like eggs, milk, meat and fish that much.

It's not that she couldn't eat them; she was just not good with their unique smell.

To put it in another way, the cream stew made in this restaurant was good enough to be her favourite.

That's why the owner served cream stew with lots of vegetables instead of meat every time she ordered it.

[Of course it's not normal. There're various surprises.]

Looking at Melissa's expression, the owner's smile deepened further.

[Wait a moment.]

The owner retreated to the back and took something that was already made.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. It's Nekoya's elf bean cream stew.]



A white soup was placed before her.

[As a farewell gift, it's my treat today. Please enjoy.]

[Ee. Thank you.]

Melissa replied with a smile.

[Then, enjoy... hmm, welcome.]

[Nu. I'm here.]

Melissa picked up a silver spoon while the owner went to tend the regular Lizardman customer that just came.

(...There's no meat after all.)

She lightly checked the ingredients of the stew.

The thick mushrooms that could be found during autumn, bright orange Caryote, fried Oranie, and the vivid green vegetable that was included afterwards.

There was no meat inside, the colourful vegetables floating in the fluffy white soup, and a delicious scent drifted from it.

(Are? This stew... the smell is different? Since there's no meat, is it specially made?)

Suddenly, Melissa noticed it.

Just a little bit, the scent was different from usual.

It's natural that there's no meat smell, but she didn't smell any milk.

(Well, I'll know after I eat it.)

Thinking so, she scooped it to her mouth.

(...Un. It's delicious.)

Melissa's face softened to that slightly sweet taste in her mouth.

Lots of vegetables were boiled thoroughly to remove their astringent taste.

Everything was so soft that it felt like they were melting inside her mouth, and they absorbed plenty of the soup.

With the taste of vegetables supplementing it, the flavor of milk was elevated.

Then, the mushrooms.

The mushrooms that contained plenty of umami were quite nostalgic as they had the exact same taste as those found in the elven forest near their hometown.

Milk soup that contained the flavours of vegetables and mushrooms.

To that rich flavor that tasted delicious with every bite, Melissa smiled.

[Ou. Is it good?]

[Yes, very. Another serving please?]

She smiled at the owner's question and nodded.

It was a pity to end such a delicious taste with just one bowl.

[Of course. I made plenty just for you. Please eat as much as you want.]

Such an owner smiled to the young woman that looked to be around the same age as his grandchild.

[...Fuu~, it was delicious. Thank you.]

And after eating 3 bowls, Melissa put down her spoon.

[Ou. It's nice to see it being eaten deliciously. Thank you for your longtime patronage.]

[By the way, how do you make this? Even though I could taste the milk, I couldn't smell it.]

At the farewell.

When she thought so, Melissa asked him.

What she felt when eating this stew.

It was... a wonder that she couldn't smell milk from it even though milk was an indispensable ingredient for making cream stew.

She thought that if she didn't ask the secret then, she would never know it.

[Aa... first of all, I made this with the ingredients that came from your world. Not only the vegetables, but the soup as well.]

The owner answered Melissa's question.

Ingredients that he bought from his otherworld merchant customer to make food for his beloved wife and grandchild.

The owner made this cream stew using only that.

...He made full use the techniques unique to his world.

[Then, in this world, milk that was not taken from animals could be made.

Elves are not good with animal's smell, aren't they? So today's stew were made without animal products.

Ma, this is called vegan stew.]

The beans that the elves grew. There was something similar in his world.

As a result, when the worried owner tried to make it, it was possible to make a similar thing.

That is why the owner chose to make this dish as a farewell gift to a longtime customer.

[Well, how to make it... please find it yourself. Unfortunately I made it a rule not to tell my recipes to my customers.]

The owner would not tell the recipe.

To teach the recipes of cuisine, which was important for business, nobody would dare to do so to a customer.

[Ma, you can do it. That's a gift from me.]

Since this was a customer who started to visit from around the beginning of otherworld dining hall, he was sure she could do it.

[...I see, thank you. It was really delicious.]

Melissa looked down when the owner said so with a smile.

This stew was the most delicious thing that Melissa had ever tasted and it would be the best gift to bring back home.

[Well then, I don't think we'll see each other anymore, take care.]

[Aa, take care. Also, I welcome you if you ever come here again.]

And the owner bid farewell to a longtime regular.

Probably he predicted that that would be the last words they would exchange.

—And 18 years had passed since she ate that “special cream stew”.

The inn where Melissa served as a chef today was a great success.

[Fuu. It has become colder lately. Melissa, give me elf bean cream stew please.]

[Un... this is delicious.]

[Un, it really is. I ate a cream stew made by humans before, but this has no animal scent when eaten.]

[Maa, this is specially made by Melissa.]

[...This, is this tofu?]

[Excuse me! Another serving of elf bean cream stew please!]

More than half of the customer of Melissa's family home inn was elves.

There was a special menu that could be eaten at the dining hall during the day and at the inn's bar during evening.

Elf bean cream stew.

A magical stew that the elves who couldn't eat animal products could enjoy.

Its reputation was no elves that lived in that area had never eaten it before.

Over the last 8 years since she last visited the restaurant, Melissa reached the truth.

On that day, the owner casually said "elf bean" cream stew.

She felt that there was a sense of incompatibility... she didn't see any elf beans in the stew and she noticed it from there.

By crushing and simmering elf beans in water, she could make something similar to cow's milk from elf beans.

Melissa learned about that and completed elf bean cream stew with reference of that day's taste.

At first, she asked her elven mother to taste it, then her mother's friend, then her acquaintance...

Eventually, the rumor was transmitted to the elves across the continent, and for Melissa's stew, elves that came all the way from other forests brought reputation and the inn was striving.

[Yes, yes. Please wait a bit. I'll serve it as soon as the new pot is done!]

Melissa shouted loudly while looking at her half-elf brothers and sisters entering the next preparation of a new pot of stew that could feed a few dozen people.

These busy days continued, making her eyes spin.

But at the same time, these days were fulfilling.

CHAPTER 47

DEEP-FRIED OYSTERS



At Western restaurant Nekoya, when the cold season came, it would join the menu until spring.

The owner's home and office on the 3rd floor of Nekoya's building.

The owner operated a vintage personal computer that he bought when he inherited the business and printed what he had saved long ago.

[Yoshi, it's printing cleanly.]

The owner nodded in good faith, looking at the paper coming out from the printer.

What was written there was a series of symbols that the owner didn't understand.

It was a different world characters named "Samanak" which was not English, let alone

Japanese.

According to his predecessor, he asked one of his oldest regulars of his generation (that still came weekly to order Roast Cutlets and beers, the self-proclaimed “wiseman”) to write it on a piece of paper.

“Deep-fried oysters are available.”

It was a signal to let the customers knew that the popular item originating from the era of previous generation that was only available in winter could be ordered now.

When he pasted the same paper written on Japanese at Monday, a lot of orders came rushing in.

(Because those small old men would definitely order it...)

That’s what the owner’s business managing experience felt.

Today again, he’s going to be very busy.

He thought so.

At the evening of the day.

Heinrich, the knight of Principality who finished his work at the fort, entered the restaurant and noticed it when he tried to order fried shrimp.

[...Eh? What are deep-fried oysters?]

There was a brand new paper stuck on the wall where people could see it immediately after entering from the entrance door.

He tilted his head seeing the words probably written by the same person that wrote the menu.

(Umu, maybe the “furai¹” means that it’s a deep-fried food like fried shrimp...)

He did not know any oyster cuisine. Even though he came from a port town, he was not familiar with oysters.

(Oh well. As usual...)

He would ask for fried shrimp. That was what he thought.

‘Chirinchirin’, the door opened.

[Ou! We’re here, owner!]

[Oops! An obstacle! Move aside!]

At the same time, there was a loud voice coming from a height about as tall as Heinrich’s waist.

[What, it’s you dwarves.]

Heinrich sidestepped while sighing at the duo.

A pair of dwarves that were as tall as Heinrich’s shoulders, carrying huge battles axes on their back.

It seemed that they always came at dusk and enjoyed their seafood with alcohol until midnight; they often came at the same time as Heinrich who visited after he finished his duties.

[Ou! Sorry!]

[Well today... ooh!]

As Heinrich avoided them, they could see the paper that was not visible till now.

One of them shouted.

[Oh my! Deep-fried oysters are available from today! Hyahoo~!]

[Guilem, what’re deep-fried oysters?]

The other dwarf asked his friend (whose name seemed to be Guilem) that was in the middle of an ecstatic dance.

[Ou! Deep-fried oysters are something that was only sold during winter! It’s delicious!]

(Hoo. I see, a special menu during winter.)

Heinrich unintentionally heard the dwarf’s loud speech.

After that, Guilem immediately went to a nearby seat and called the waitress.

[Ou! I want to order deep-fried oysters! Two portions for the time being! And 2 cups of cold beer!]

[Ye, yes! Thank you very much.]

Sitting on a chair that was too tall for his short legs, the other dwarf ordered while swinging his legs.

[Here, Gard! Don't just stand there! Don't you want to sit down quickly?]

[O, ou!]

The other dwarf (whose name was Gard) hurriedly walked to his friend.

(...Fumu.)

Heinrich, who was watching the two of them, went to a different table.

[Welcome. What do you want to order?]

Heinrich ordered after the waitress came back from telling the owner of the order.

[Oh right... give me deep-fried oysters. I want it with bread. I also would like Shrimp Cutlet Sandwich for takeaway.]



Seeing the dwarf in high spirit, Heinrich became interested in it.

This unknown dish of deep-fried oysters.

After a while.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. Here's your deep-fried oysters.]

The waitress gently placed it before Heinrich.

[Umu. Thanks.]

After thanking her, Heinrich looked at the plate in front of him.

(Fumu. It looks similar to fried shrimp...)

The deep red fruit vegetable called cherry tomatoes were placed on top of thin green leafy vegetable.

The white tartar sauce that could only be found in this restaurant which were tastefully made of eggs, mayonnaise and the strong sour taste of lemon.

While it had the same composition as fried shrimp, there was a notable difference.

There were six brown elliptical deep-fried food.



There still was a sizzling sound coming from it.

(Umu. First of all... eat it without adding anything.)

Swallowing his saliva, he pierced the unknown food with his fork.

Besides fried shrimp, in this restaurant there were other “deep-fried foods” such as “Katsu” that were cooked in a lot of oil.

Those dishes looked the same at first glance, the only difference was the seasoning that fit them.

Sauce if it's meat, tartar sauce and shoyu if it's seafood.

A woman adventurer that was his acquaintance preferred her minced cutlet to be eaten with sauce, while an elf customer of this restaurant preferred to use shoyu.

In Halflings' case, there was even a possibility of seeking various way of eating the food according to their mood.

And this time it was deep-fried oysters.

The fact that it was served with tartar sauce indicated that it's seafood.

However, Heinrich didn't know what it tasted like.

That's why Heinrich decided not to add anything to it at first; he wanted to determine its taste.

The moment he stabbed it with his fork, it seemed to have a light texture.

It was not so big so he didn't need to cut it with a knife.

Heinrich gently carried it to his mouth... and chewed.

(...Oo. It's a kind of shellfish! It's hot... but it's delicious!)

Spreading in his mouth was the juice plentifully contained in the oyster.

The taste had faint bitterness with its umami along with the light and fragrant taste of the coating.

Heinrich unintentionally let out a hot breath.

[Delicious! It's delicious! What is this!?!]

[Ou! This is deep-fried oyster! Winter doesn't start before you eat this!

Oi! Another serving! With a bottle of whiskey!]

While Heinrich was about to start on his second oyster, it seemed that the other table had already finished their food and ordered another serving.

(Yoshi, next.)

He took the lemon placed beside the oysters.

If he ate this fruit normally, it wouldn't be delicious due to its strong acidity.

However, Heinrich already knew.

With his fingers calloused from swinging his sword every day, he squeezed the lemon juice onto the oysters.

After that, he placed the lemon and pierced the oyster.

He lightly dipped the oyster with the tartar sauce and took a bite.

(Umu! As I thought! Deep-fried oysters fit with tartar sauce!)

He was very satisfied with the taste.

The fragrant coating with the scent of the sea.

When lemon juice and tartar sauce were added, a different side of deep-fried oyster was shown.

Heinrich ate the oysters one by one while being very satisfied with the flavor...

He finished his food in an instant.

But, it's not enough. It's still not enough.

[Young lady. Sorry to inconvenience you but I would like a serving each of deep-fried oysters and fried shrimp please.]



Heinrich told her his additional order.

[Umu. Deep-fried oysters, huh. I'll remember it.]

After a while, Heinrich returned to the forest where the door was located while rubbing his satisfied belly.

After eating his additional deep-fried oysters and fried shrimp, he ordered another serving of deep-fried oysters.

[I give up. This makes me want to eat it again next time.]

He walked while muttering that.

The fried shrimp was as delicious as usual, but deep-fried oysters were delicious too.

Recalling the taste that was different from fried shrimp, he swallowed his spit.

(Since it's only available during winter, that means when spring comes, it can't be ordered again for more than six months.)

When he thought so, it would be a shame if he didn't eat it.

For the time being, he would order both fried shrimp and deep-fried oysters the next

Satur's day.

Heinrich made that conviction.

That was the day he had a new favourite food.

1. フライ – furai of Kakifurai, the deep-fried oysters. I don't want to write "deep-fried means deep-fried food". That just sounds repetitive and weird.

CHAPTER 48

CREAM CHOUX



The time that came once in 7 days was a valuable comfort for Adelheide.

[Well, such a thing...]

[Ee. Onii-sama, to stand on the front line, wasn't it a bit reckless?]

[...It was no such thing. That was necessary to encourage the soldiers. You ought to let father handle the command from the back.]

[But is it necessary for you to do so? I heard that the soldiers of Sand Country are excellent.]

While drinking a warm drink called “café au lait” (as coffee was recently received by her parents, people could even drink it at the imperial garrison) and filling her belly with sweet cold dessert and plenty of cow's milk, she was interested in talking.



With her was the half-elf Victoria who had the wisdom of a magician and a sense of serenity while she was admiring Sharif and Lana who were noble siblings from a foreign country.

They were Adelheide's new friends that she met in this "restaurant".

The wonderful creation "parfait" that could only be eaten in this restaurant and their talks were irreplaceable for Adelheide who lived a lonely life in her abode, and it was one of her fun pastimes.



However, such time couldn't last long.

[...N. I have to return soon.]

The half-elf magician considered the time that had passed since she entered the restaurant and whispered so.

[Ara. Is it the time already?]

[Unfortunately we have no choice. Lana, we have to go too.]

Saying so, Sharif raised his hand and called Aletta.

[Sorry but I would like the bill. I'll pay for Adelheide's portion too. Also, the usual ice cream takeaway please.]



[...Same for me. And the usual pudding for takeaway.]



[Yes! Please wait a moment!]

Aletta nodded and retreated to tell the owner.

Shortly, the owner came out.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. Here's your takeaway of ice cream and pudding. Please finish it as soon as possible.]

While watching Lana and Victoria receiving it, Adelheide suddenly thought.

(Takeaway, sounds nice...)

Unfortunately, none of the parfaits that Adelheide loved could be takeaway.

She could understand without asking why.

The parfait was so fragile that it melted in a short time it was not eaten.

Nonetheless it could only be eaten once in 7 days. It's not possible otherwise.

[Um, owner, is there something full of cream like parfait that can be takeaway?]

Such an idea jumped out of Adelheide's mouth.

If there wasn't any, she would even take the Fruit Sandwich that she had eaten before.



While she was thinking that way.

[Un? A pastry full of cream that's suitable for takeaway... that's right.]

The owner thought a bit.

Speaking of cream-based dessert, most cakes were made of fresh cream, but when the cream was similar to those in parfait, it's quite limited.

[...In that case, cream choux seem to be the best case.]



It was Victoria who helped the owner who had thought for a moment.

She had eaten all the sweets in this restaurant. When asked for a cream dessert, she immediately came up with what was applicable.

[Cream choux... aa.]

The owner was convinced.

Certainly cream was the main character.

[Well then, would you like to takeaway cream choux? Certainly... no, there's custard and whipped cream filling.]

[Yes, please. First... for two.]

She gave an additional order.

[For two?]

She nodded shyly to the owner's question.

[Yes. In any case, I thought I would like to share it with Hannah.]

It was a delicious pastry.

Rather than enjoying it on her own, she would like Hannah who had accompanied her from the Imperial Palace to share it with her.

Built for the royal family's summer retreat, in a place away from the Capital City, the so-called "Wilhelm Villa".

There was a cute princess living there now.

Her name was Adelheid.

She was given the same name as the Emperor's mother and first daughter, now she was living there for recuperation of a pulmonary disease called "poor killer" that infected her.

The disease was different from injury and couldn't be healed by praying to God.

Even if a human's ability "to heal" was enhanced by the miraculous ability of priests who were said to be able to revive the dead by utilizing strong magical power and precise ritual, it simply became stronger and made no sense.

And among that many diseases that was particularly troubling was a disease commonly known as "poor killer".

It was a lung disease, it caused coughs that won't stop and the patient's strength was gradually deprived. It was also occasionally transmitted to other people.

The story that families who took care of the patient for the whole time became infected with the disease were wide spread, but it was said that it's not possible to be infected by the disease only by being near with the patient for a short while.

Besides, the cure method was not to do anything for a few years and wait for the disease to lose power simply by having a lifestyle with plenty nutrition and rest.

(Those that could not afford to do so couldn't be healed for life, and it was the reason they would eventually die of "poor killer".)

The disease caused the poor people to die and cost the rich a few years of their youth.

It was a terrible disease for everyone in the world.

Due to such disease, searching for a new maid for Adelheid (after knowing the original one had retired on the next day) was difficult.

Although Adelheid was infected by poor killer, she was a princess.

She was also not a princess of a small country.

She was the princess of the great Empire that boasted the greatest power in the Eastern Continent.

Of course, to become an accompanying maid, a certain amount of standard was required; commoners could not be hired as it was similar to selling one's self to reduce the number of mouths to be fed.

Having a reasonable family status, at the same time it wouldn't be troublesome if

infected by the poor killer by any chance.

Hannah was chosen under such conditions.

Hannah who served Adelheid at Wilhelm Villa was the daughter of a lower noble family originating at the Capital City.

Having two older brothers, two younger brothers and two younger sisters, she was the eldest daughter of the family, her parents had missed the turbulent time of 50 years ago since the Empire's foundation. They were not rich and their strict family circumstances caused them to rely on Hannah's income from working at the Imperial Palace.

Also, considering the probability that she couldn't get married before working at the palace, she had trained as a priestess for several years in the temple of the most common Earth God to earn a job, as even farmers with the ability to perform a simple healing prayer were able to earn a copper sacred mark.

The family had old and venerable pedigree, with the power of a low grade priestess, and the family circumstances that made sure that it wouldn't be troublesome if she was by any chance infected with the disease.

Hannah accepted the job because the current emperor thought that she was the best possible caretaker of his beloved daughter.

That was six months ago.

The job as Adelheid's maid was an easy task, if anything.

Speaking of work, she was quite happy with cleaning the room and providing adequate care of Adelheid's personal belonging.

Even so, she was not given an employee's room and lived in a guestroom of the villa (although it had a meaning to isolate her from other servants). The money was also quite good.

Apart from Adelheid's care, Hannah was not entrusted with any work as there were other employees that took care of the household.

Since Adelheid was sick, she did not wear luxurious dresses and wore clothes with

plain designs that were easy to wear and relax in.

Her mistress, Adelheid herself, was a noblewoman with no selfishness and sarcasm.

Her only danger was the fear of being infected with poor killer if her luck was bad.

(It is said that there is a responsibility of braving the risk of being infected for the Empire. Even if I can undergo medical care for several years, I would definitely miss my marriage because I'm working in a detached household. But in that case, I'll go back to the temple and become a priestess.)

Thus, Hannah had full accustomed to living and working at the villa.

[Excuse me, Your Highness.]

With a reverent bow, she stepped into Adelheid's bedroom.

(...Yoshi. It seems that she's going out for a walk.)

Hannah confirmed that Adelheid was not there as usual.

(I'm a little late, so I have to tidy up quickly.)

She quickly cleaned the room with a wiping cloth and a broom.

Once every 7 days, in this period of time, her mistress, Adelheid went out for a long walk.

Since she disappeared away quickly, it was a secret loophole not informed to the royal family.

However, the guards that guarded the entrance of the villa never saw Adelheid.

Either way, she always came back at sunset so Hannah was convinced that it was alright.

It was convenient.

After all, Adelheid who came to this residence for medical recuperation usually did not go out too much.

As long there was no need to change the sheets, full-fledged cleaning was satisfying.

So she used the once in 7 day opportunities to do so.

‘Chirinchirin’, Hannah looked back hearing the sound of a bell coming from behind her.

[Ara, Hannah. Thank you for your good work.]

[Hee!? Your Highness!?!]

Hannah shouted in surprise seeing Adelheid who appeared suddenly as if she used transference magic.

Adelheid came out of a black door attached to a place in the room.

It seemed like it was hidden by magic, as soon as Adelheid closed the door, it suddenly disappeared.

And Adelheid, who came out from it, brought a small box.

A rectangular box with the drawing of a winged dog monster.

[Please keep this somewhere cold and dry. And please bring it to me tomorrow afternoon.]

She was handed the box.

It seemed to be made of paper, a mysterious box with a precise drawing.

[Your Highness, what on earth is this box?]

Hannah who had no idea what this is asked about its content.

With respect to Hannah, Adelheid did not show a discontent face and answered her.

[It’s a confectionary using cream called “cream choux”.]

[A confectionary, you say?]

[Yes, Victoria-sama said that it was “a confectionary that one can enjoy the taste of cream the most” of the restaurant.]

Adelheid answered with a smile.

(Who is Victoria-sama? And what kind of restaurant is that!?!)

Hannah felt like honestly asking various questions to that sentence, but the other

person was the imperial princess.

Any further questions would be rude.

[...I understand. Well, I'll take care of it for you.]

Swallowing her questions, Hannah received the box.

[Please. Aa, and when you bring it tomorrow, please bring along kaffa with plenty of milk and sugar.]

[Very well.]

The box was surprisingly light and the questions that she wanted to ask increased.

The next day.

[Your Highness, I brought kaffa and yesterday's box.]

On a silver tray, she brought the box and a ceramic jar of kaffa with matching cups that had pretty flower design given from the Sand Country.

[Ee. Good work. Please pour the kaffa.]

[Yes.]

Hannah prepared the kaffa according to Adelheid's instruction.

Meanwhile, Adelheid opened the box and took out the content.

[...So this is cream choux?]

Hannah prepared the kaffa following the way of Sand Country (although that drink was not familiar in the Empire, Adelheid liked to drink it with sugar and milk, so Hannah remembered to mix them) and asked Adelheid.

It was plain at first sight.



Placed on a foil like silver thin paper, it did not have colourful fruits; it was brown and had sugar similar to white snow sprinkled on top.

It was an item that was more similar to a bread rather than confectionary.

[Yes. I had one yesterday. It was very tasty.]

Adelheid who “tasted” it yesterday remembered the sweetness and answered Hannah’s question lightly.

Unintentionally, she wanted to eat two, but she held back.

Adelheid recently learned.

[Here’s your kaffa.]

With the kaffa gently placed in front of her, Adelheid said.

[Ee. Thanks. Well then, Hannah, please sit.]

[Ha!?!]

She urged Hannah to sit with a smile full of happiness.

With Hannah surprised with the unexpected words, Adelheid repeated herself.

[I recently learned about it. Rather than eating delicious food alone, it is more enjoyable to eat with a company.

...A, perhaps you don’t like being with me?]

Her happy face fell and she tried to make a sad face.

A secret technique recently taught by her “friends” from the Western Continent.

[No!? No such thing!]

The effect is immediate. There was no way she found it detestable, so she hurriedly sat on the same table with Adelheid.

Ordinarily, it would be frowned upon and someone would stop her, but there were only two of them in that room.

There was no one that could scold them.

[Is that so, that’s good. Well then, you also need this.]

With her sad face immediately changing back to her original smile, Adelheid handed it.

[Please try this. It’s very pleasing in the mouth.]

With such a smile, Hannah couldn’t help but to eat.

[We, well then. I thank the Earth God for the food today...]

Hannah easily dedicated her prayer for the unknown food.

(...Are? This confectionary is not that sweet...)

First bite. Hannah who gently nibbled the surface discreetly questioned the taste.

It was certainly sweet as there was sugar on top. However, she was unsatisfied.

There was nothing wrong with the slightly sweet light wheat flavor, but the sweetness was too weak for Hannah’s “high-class sweet”.

(The weight is also somehow strange... well, the fact that Her Highness bought this is already strange... oo!?)

Hannah who took a second bite quickly while thinking was caught again by its unexpected taste.

(Swe, sweet!? What is this!? The content is different!?)

The confectionary seemed to be made like a leather bag filled with content.

The moment the skin was broken, the content overflowed in her mouth.

It was light and beyond soft, as if it was filled with white cloud.

The sweetness was still modest, but there was an extra taste of milk.

Until now, she, who was a noble though of lower strata, knew luxury goods but this was different from those.

But it was definitely...

[...Delicious.]

[Isn't it? I was also surprised when I first ate it.]

Adelheid's smile deepened after hearing Hannah's words.

It was good to eat delicious things by herself, but it's nice to see other person's face saying it was delicious.

That was good. In this lonely palace life, she was her caretaker who she saw face-to-face.

She did not notice that Adelheid was looking at her with a charming expression and further ate the cream choux.

(...Un. This skin. To match its content, its sweetness was made to be weak.)

She thought such.

The skin which was only slightly sweet by itself.

When its sweet content was added, the taste became more delicious.

It gave a chewy texture because its content alone was too soft, with its sweetness suppressed, it further elevated the taste of its content.

(Since Her Highness recommend this... a!?)

She was eating it when she noticed.

The taste... its content had changed.

Unexpectedly, Hannah peered at the tooth-shape profile that she had caused on the pastry.

It seemed that it was near the boundary of the content.

The part at the end was white; it was the part that she had eaten so far.

While the other part was yellow.

[These cream choux contains both whipped cream and custard.]



Adelheid told Hannah of its identity.

[Custard...]

Hannah continued to eat.

The white content... unlike whipped cream, custard was heavier and sweeter.

Whipped cream with milk taste and custard with egg flavor.

Two different kinds of content were attached and covered in one skin, truly a luxurious dessert.

(This... is the most delicious sweet I have ever eaten...)

While thinking where the princess procured this, she finished the cream choux.

She sighed satisfactorily and blushed when she recalled where she was and the person in front of her.

[For, forgive me, Your Highness! I have...!]

[Please do not worry. I am happy that you enjoy it.]

Adelheid was extremely satisfied looking at the blushing Hannah who had a smudge of whipped cream on the corner of her mouth.

And she started on her share.

(Ee. As I thought, cream choux is really... ara? Hannah?)

While enjoying the taste, Adelheid noticed... that Hannah was staring at the cream choux she was eating.

That kind of state.

(Next time it might be better to buy 3 or 4... I feel unsatisfied when I eat only one.)

Adelheid changed her schedule a bit after 6 days.

CHAPTER 49

MAPO TOFU



On Saturdays, Nekoya offered meals for employees that went to work on Saturdays. In the morning was a very ordinary dish in Japan, mostly something with bread and soup.

During the day, the usual meal that was available to customers was served with a purpose to remind what the dish in this restaurant tasted like.

From evening until closing time, depending on which entrance the customer came from, the food served at this time would change depending on the owner's whim.

...Since it was on whim, the food that was served may not be what was usually offered by the restaurant.

For example, if the owner used materials that he made as a hobby, or using an ingredient he received as a gift.

That day was also such a day.

Late at night, after giving the beef stew to the last customer as usual, the owner decided what to make with the remaining ingredients.



What remained were tofu and minced pork, along with spring onion.

(...Un. I'll make that.)

After he decided what to cook, he started to cook as soon as possible.

He quickly chopped the spring onion and cut the tofu.

He poured oil onto his favourite well-maintained wok, stir-fried the ground pork and quickly seasoned it.

There was no waste in his movement, and the material instantly changed on the wok.

(...Unexpectedly, it doesn't become rusty. This skill of mine.)

The owner thought such thing and smiled wryly.

In the past, the owner aimed to become a chef that specialized on Chinese food.

Nowadays, the owner who lost his parents to a car accident was an old man...

While inheriting the restaurant from his grandfather and doing a job of serving “the people from other side”, he used to shake his wok every day during high school.

Because of that, he sometimes wanted to make Chinese food.

Even now, the Chinese restaurant where he once worked at was still prospering, so he did not make it for customers and only occasionally made it as employee meals.

Fortunately, the owner’s skill of making Chinese food had not decreased; it was still popular among the chefs who came to visit this restaurant.

[...Yoshi, like this.]

He scooped the finished dish, tasted the reddish tofu and nodded.

It’s a bit less spicy than the owner’s preference, but this was fine considering the person who would eat this.

He quickly arranged the dish on a plate and placed it on a tray with a bowl of white rice.

[Ou. It’s ready.]

He said so and lifted the tray.

[Yes! Thank you very much!]

After cleaning and washing her hands, Aletta’s eyes were glued to the food that the owner brought while replying.

With the appetite of youth, her eyes were filled with anticipation while her stomach was grumbling.

If Aletta had a tail, it would be wagging for a while.

(...Looking at her, she seems like a dog begging for food.)

Thinking a little bit rudely, he arranged the dishes in front of Aletta.

[Etto, what is today's dish?]

While smelling the aroma of the red dish full of onions and chopped green onions, Aletta asked curiously.

As it was a dish that was not served to customers, it should be a dish that was only made for employee meals.

The unique scent of drifting spice stimulated her empty stomach.

...She had no idea what kind of dish this was, but it looked delicious.

[Ou. Today's mapo tofu.]



The owner told the name of the dish while arranging a bowl of rice and a large bowl of the day's remaining miso soup.

[Yoshi, let's eat. Today's Chinese food is spicy.]

The owner urged Aletta to eat the food that he practiced to make in the olden days.

[Well then, let's eat.]

[Yes! ...Demon God, thank you for the food today...]

The owner and Aletta prayed to their respective gods and picked up a spoon.

She gently scooped up some of the red food.

(Etto, today's dish is "Chinese", the owner said so.)

Thinking that, she looked at the owner eating mapo tofu in front of her.

It seemed that other world's cuisine was divided into several categories.

To Aletta, everything was "otherworld cuisine", but it seemed to change with the way it was seasoned.

When she thought about it, the customers who came to this restaurant came from different places (including those that were not humans).

People who lived in the Kingdom where Aletta resided had slightly different cuisine preference from people of the Empire and the Principality, and the people from Western Continent who occasionally came to the Kingdom had completely different preferences.

In addition, the regular customers who had dark skin strangely said "those who had culture are different from people of both continents".

...Although the owner who was willing to hire her with exorbitant amount of money was the strangest existence to Aletta, she didn't mind it too much.

In Nekoya, food that she usually served to customers like miso soup and katsudon were called "Japanese food".



And “Chinese food” was the food that the owner made as employee meals once a month, they were often spicy.

...Because the spiciest food like “curry rice” was considered Western food, she was not confident with the classification.



However, since there was a high possibility of it being spicy, she taste-tested it first.

(U... it's spicy after all... but it's tasty!)

She slowly chewed to ascertain the taste.

First, it looked as spicy as it looked. The inside of her mouth felt hot.

At the same time, she tasted meat. Apparently there was plenty of minced meat.

The greasy minced pork gave out large amount of meat juice and added meat flavor to mapo tofu.

And the tofu that was the main ingredient of the dish seemed to enclose the taste.

The tofu itself had little to no taste, but that was why the sauce was thick and spicy.

(Un. Let's eat this with rice.)

While enjoying the taste of green onions included in the mapo tofu, she scooped some rice into her mouth.

As Aletta expected, even with tofu, the strong flavor of mapo tofu fitted well with rice.

When she chewed, the tofu contained the flavor of the spicy sauce and meat juice, and when she added rice, its sweetness would join mapo tofu's taste and became even more delicious.

She guessed this dish was meant to be eaten with rice.

She watched the owner directly poured some mapo tofu over the rice and eat both of them at the same time with confidence.

(But then the problem is...)

If she did so, the rice would be finished before the mapo tofu.

[...I'll have a second bowl of rice. Aletta, do you want more?]

And the owner asked Aletta as if he anticipated it.

[Yes, please!]

Aletta nodded to his offer.

She finished her work and wrapped herself up with an old coat that she prepared for winter, and today she was preparing on her next journey for her employer that was unable to go to otherworld dining hall while carrying a can of cookies for her employer's sister who came frequently recently, Aletta walked at an unpopulated street during the night.

(Although it's winter, somehow it's a little warm.)

Thanks to the warm water she drank when she was eating, her body was warm even though it's winter.

While feeling happiness and satisfaction about that, Aletta rushed to her employer's house which was also her workplace.

CHAPTER 50

CURRY RICE ONCE AGAIN



The ground shook without a sound, “Kuro” was pulled out from the bottom of the sea of deep thoughts.

—Again, huh.

The land floating at the end of the sky... this place called moon was an ideal place for a lonely and quiet life where there was nothing except for darkness though it's full of magic.

Unlike when she was on the earth, there was no sound, and the rocks suddenly falling from the sky sometimes exerted tremendous power.

In fact, once, when a large rock hit her, it penetrated her black scales, even though it was a large rock without magical power, sometimes it made a scratch on her scales.

After that, although she took countermeasures by applying protection magic, at the

moment it fell close, there would be a shockwave to the extent the land shook.

—Un?

And when the vibration stopped and Kuro tried to sink into the sea of deep thoughts, she noticed.

A black shadow floating on the white ground lit by the sun.

Perhaps it was the influence of the magical power distorted by the falling rock earlier.

There appeared something with magical power.

—This is... the magic used by creatures like elves?

By approaching it, Kuro who was the weakest among the 6 pillars but the best when it came to control could see through its natural identity.

When she was on earth, after the battle against “that”, she was forced to escape from the battle amongst themselves, but she remembered 1,368 years ago that the elves were terribly fragile.

The fundamental part was similar to the magic clad on their bodies.

Those elves had weaker magical power like Kuro as well (of course, when compared to her, the magnitudes of their weaker magical powers were vast), so probably they excelled at controlling it.

—This leads to the place where the elves are.

Looking over the other side of the door, Kuro noticed it.

This seemed to transfer to a different world, and there were elves behind the door (their ears seemed to be shorter than the ones she saw before, but it’s a trivial

difference).

—I'll go. I have to get ready.

It's not bad to continue sinking into deep thoughts just like how she had done so for the last 34,684 years, but sometimes it wouldn't be bad to see other living beings.

Kuro thought so while reforming her body to a female elf while shaking her body and conscious of the power that leaked out of her.

...In the past, elves died instantly when they encountered her.

They were so weak that they couldn't bear the "death-bearing dark power" that she unconsciously scattered to her surroundings.

It would be the same as the elves over the door.

She thought so, but it was too late.

—Let's go.

And Kuro, which had changed her figure to an elf, grasped the door's handle.

'Chirinchirin', a wave of magical power echoed in the soundless end of sky.

While listening to it, Kuro stepped into the other side of the door.

On that day, Alphonse of Principality heard the story and was keenly interested in it.

[...A new curry rice, is it?]

He asked to confirm the intriguing story that he heard from the owner a while ago.

[That's right.]

The owner nodded and repeated his words.

[No, actually, it was requested a while ago. Because some people couldn't eat pork, I should make a curry that doesn't use pork meat.

So I tried to make it and finally convinced that it was complete. So I thought to add it to the menu.]

In the otherworld dining hall, the customers were not limited to just Japanese people.

Curry that he made for the workers of nearby companies that came from far west foreign countries.

It was created to be spicier than the usual curry, so it was fortunately good for foreign customers and Japanese customers who ordered it due to the rarity; it was a happy addition to the menu.

[Fumu, so you want me to try it.]

After listening to the story, Alphonse was convinced.

He was not familiar with the circumstances of the other world where the owner lived, but because the owner expressed that it was the way over there, he guessed it was made differently from the curry rice he always ate.

An unknown curry which Alphonse had never eaten.

It greatly stimulated Alphonse's curiosity.

[Of course I want it. Get it ready right away.]

There was nothing to be worried about.

Alphonse instantly ordered the new curry.

[Thank you for your patronage.]

The owner immediately returned to the kitchen in response.

And he waited a bit.

[Thank you for waiting. Here's your chicken curry.]



The owner gently put the new curry and rice along with a jug of lemon water.

[Please enjoy... it's spicier than usual so please be careful.]

Along with the usual words, the owner returned to work, leaving Alphonse alone with the new curry.

[Umu, I suppose I should eat.]

He grabbed a sparkling silver spoon.

(...Hoo, indeed this is quite different from the usual one.)

First, he observed the curry in front of him.

The curry seemed like a soup at first sight.

Curry-coloured soup in a deep bowl.

In the soup, although the skinless meat of a young chicken swam, no other ingredients were seen.

There was white rice that was served with curry, but it was placed separately on its usual big flat plate and looked different from the usual curry that was served with the sauce poured on top of the rice.

(Even so... the scent is strong.)

Drifting from it was the scent of curry, plenty of exciting spices.

It was somewhat stronger than usual and stimulated his stomach.

(First of all... just the curry only.)

He would savour it separately and scooped the curry... along with the meat.

[Nuu!?!]

At that moment, Alphonse eyes widened and he almost fainted in agony.

The flavor attacked Alphonse, like a ferocious fire inside his mouth.

(Wha, what!? This is spicy!)

He grasped the glass of water beside him and gulped it down.

The fire was quenched with the refreshing flavor of lemon water and Alphonse relaxed.

[Fuu... after all, curry should be eaten with rice.]

While realizing that again, Alphonse scooped a mouthful of rice with his spoon.

Then he dipped it into the curry... he ate it after it was dyed with curry.

(...Oo, as I thought.)

He was satisfied with the taste inside his mouth.

The ferocious hot flavor that attacked him earlier was relieved by eating it together with rice.

Not only that, he also noticed the nature of the curry that he didn't taste before eating it with rice.

At first glance the curry might seem like a soup, but he knew again that it should be eaten with rice.

(I see... it's not that the curry doesn't contain vegetables, they just completely melted in the sauce.)

The new curry contained the flavor of vegetable and a lot of chicken meat.

Perhaps, the vegetables were chopped finely and left to stew in the curry for a long time.

With all the vegetables dissolved in the soup, all of their umami was integrated into the curry.

As a result of that, while he couldn't enjoy the vegetables' texture like usual, the curry's taste increased.

(And this chicken meat is so soft...)

The chicken meat was the only ingredient left in the curry.

It was cut into a slightly larger than bite-size, but it was soft enough that it collapsed in a blink of eye just by putting it inside his mouth.

The skin was peeled and the meat was boiled in the curry for a long time while removing the scum, condensing the curry by saturating it with the meat fat.

It was qualified to be called the leading role and informing people that this was a chicken curry.

Once he noticed it, Alphonse was no longer confused.

Alphonse finished the curry in no time.

[So, how was it? I was worried that it wouldn't match the palate of people from over there since it was spicier than usual.]

Soon, the owner came to ask for his impression.

Fortunately, it was popular with "people of this side" but since Alphonse was the first person from over there to try it, he was concerned for the impression.

[Umu. You're right. This is much spicier than the usual curry and is a different thing... but this is really delicious! Owner, I would like another serving.]

—Me too.

Alphonse liked it so much that he asked for another serving.

[Yes. Then 2 servings... eehh!?!]

The owner replied pleasantly then realized that there was a sense of incompatibility... and shouted in surprise.

—Is something the matter?

In a voice that directly sounded in their heads, “she” tilted her head and asked the owner.

A girl with transparent white skin, moon-coloured eyes, pointed ears and long jet black hair that reached the floor.

An elf... probably.

The owner had dealt with otherworld customers for 10 years.

The characteristics of the girl resembled that of an elf.

There was one point that was largely out of the owner’s knowledge.

[...Ano, customer... that, where are your clothes?]

Her figure was not covered by any sort of clothing.

—Clothes?

From the words that she didn’t understand, Kuro tilted her head and observed her surroundings and the circumstances.

—I see.

All the other inhabitants covered their bodies with plant threads and animal fur.

Kuro was not familiar with it, but it seemed to be the elves’ unique culture.

—I understand. I’ll prepare it immediately.

As long as this was an elven nest, she would follow its custom.

Thinking so, Kuro prepared “clothes” immediately.

In the corner of her eyes, she saw a surprised female elf.

Kuro decided it was best to imitate her dress.

Kuro concluded so as she made her clothes.

She made the small dust drifting in the restaurant into “clothes” using her magic.

As a result, Kuro was clad in a jet black waitress outfit.

—Is this okay?

[...Fuul!]

Kuro who was now clothed asked the owner.

[E, a, yes... magic sure is great.]

While surprised by the “typical magic” that occurred before his eyes, the owner nodded.

To think she created a dress out of nothing and clothed herself quickly.

He knew that there was magic over there, but this was the first time he witnessed a magic like something out of a fairytale.

[...Umu, as expected of an elf. They are magic users after all...]

Alphonse who also witnessed it accepted the surprising occurrence.

Alphonse who was a master swordman was not familiar with the way of magic.

Nevertheless the magic done in front of them was normal... no, it would be impossible for human mages, but elves were originally better mages compared to humans.

There was nothing wrong if she could do it.

[Owner, chicken curry for this girl. I'll pay for her share.]

Alphonse said as a thank-you substitute for a rare display.

He had paid for this restaurant's curry a few decades ago.

It seemed that this girl had no alternative.

[Yes. It'll be out soon so please just wait there a little bit.]

The owner agreed with him and returned to the kitchen, preparing a serving for this strange girl too.

Yes, the only person that noticed the magical anomaly that the girl used was the wiseman who had more magic repertoire than elves, and it was no surprise that Artorius spat out his beer who drank too much in surprise.

(Im, impossible... no, don't tell me...)

The event in front of him was not a dream, Artorius thought with his genius brain.

Even he and other elves couldn't do it, in a short time even with a special catalyst without any materials.

There was one "regular" who was a pillar that could do so.

(...Don't tell me, another one?)

Without thinking of its possibilities, Artorius looked down.

...He realized that there was nothing he could do on his own.

[Thank you for waiting. Here are your chicken curries.]

The owner placed two identical chicken curries in front of Alphonse and the seated Kuro before returning back to work.

After seeing it somehow, Kuro reminded herself of how Alphonse ate it when she observed the restaurant and scooped the white stuff with a spoon, soaked it with the sauce, and ate it.

—Delicious.

This was the first time Kuro ate a food and was greatly inspired by her tongue and curiosity.

A soup named “chicken curry” which was made of meat, flowers and its seeds with a lot of water.

Certainly, when Kuro was still on earth, it seemed that among the creatures that couldn’t directly absorb the surrounding magical power, those who had their own intelligence were making something similar.

—I see. No wonder this is favoured by Red.

The softened meat gushed its juice inside her mouth, and using the flowers, an unexpected sensation occurred just by eating the food.

To the comfort of that taste, she remembered her compatriots who liked to say that “meals” were not necessary for their kind who could directly absorb the surrounding magical power.

Of the six pillars, the one who strongly dwelt the power of fire, the most aggressive among all of them.

They had not met in 34,684 years but she seemed to be doing well.

When eating while considering such things, the food was finished.

—Another serving.

She presented her empty plate to the girl who seemed to be carrying the role of delivering the food previously, and told the elven girl with the horn.

[Hyaa!? ...A, yes, I understand.]

The girl was surprised to receive the telepathy but nodded in confirmation.

Then she waited a moment.

[Thank you for waiting. Here’s your chicken curry.]

She ate the chicken curry brought by the girl.

...Kuro repeated the act 100 times until all the customers went home and the restaurant was closed.

Kuro appeared in the restaurant when half a day had already passed.

[What is this? What a rare sight.]

Her voice was transmitted while she was still eating the chicken curry.

—Red?

To that nostalgic voice, Kuro halted her hands and watched the other person.

There was a former compatriot that changed her figure to match the elves.

[Yes. Indeed. It seems that you haven't changed.]

The Red Queen smiled wryly seeing Kuro's unchanging temperament to such extent that it was the same tens of thousands of years ago.

Certainly, it was the same person.

Kuro was the wisest and the most indifferent among all 6 pillars except for her own interests with the power of darkness.

Once, after the destruction of "Myriad Colour of Chaos" by all of them, she chose the end of the sky as her territory and left the earth. Though they had not met since then, it seemed that she had not changed either.

[It seems that a door has appeared in your territory... oh well.]

With a wry smile and serious expression, the Red Queen asked her former compatriot... and her rival, in some cases.

[I have one thing to ask.]

—What?

Red Queen knew Kuro's true nature.

Although Kuro was firmly indifferent to things that didn't interest her... she was firmly attached to those that did interest her.

Depending on the reply, she could figure out which power was better.

And the Red Queen asked the question.

[What is the most delicious food in this restaurant?]

—Chicken curry.

She responded immediately.

This intense flavor couldn't be outdone by any other food in the restaurant.

Therefore, the best food in this restaurant was chicken curry.

It was self-evident for Kuro.

[That's good. You're mistaken.]

To that reply, the Red Queen decided a ruling with slight relief and great satisfaction.

[Oi, owner! For this girl, everything she eats is paid by me. Understand?]

[E!? Is that fine!? No, if you're okay with it, then it's fine.]

The owner instantly confirmed the words and thought about it.

Where did this girl pack the curry... even though she had a slender body and she ate more than her weight with such speed.

Naturally the amount of money she had to pay also reached an abnormal amount for an individual to pay.

However, it still didn't reach two gold coins; he thought that this customer who regularly paid two gold coins would pay it.

[Absolutely. This is an old friend of mine, so I don't mind paying for her. So we can make use of this degree of flexibility.]

—I appreciate it.

Kuro said her gratitude to the Red Queen's dignified words.

Thus, a regular was added to otherworld dining hall along with a new menu.

A mysterious girl who appeared with the opening of the restaurant and left when it was closed.

No one knew her identity except for one person.

CHAPTER 51

CROQUETTES



There were four heroes in the Eastern Continent.

Leonardo was a proud Saint of the Temple of Light, loved and protected by God of Light more than anyone in the Eastern Continent.

From the Kingdom, a genius who was the strongest magic user in the whole world, the Great Sage Artorius.

The Sword God Alexander, who continued to spend his long life of half-elf in the battlefield, able to defeat even the demon king with one sword.

...And then, with aptitude for black magic comparable to Artorius, a samurai swordsmanship hailing from the Western Continent comparable to Alexander, and loved by the Goddess of Darkness similar Leonardo's.

The hero who ended the war with evil demons that spanned for hundreds of years and killed the Evil God summoned by the demon king from the chaos of the world in exchange of her life, Yomi.

With the effort of these 4 heroes, the demons significantly lost their powers and the era of human peace began in the Eastern Continent.

That was about 70 years ago.

With the exception of Yomi, all three of them were still alive.

They separated and walked their own path.

Leonardo accomplished a feat incomparable to anyone, as a pope who gathered the believers of Temple of Light.

Artorius with his genius brain became a great wise man who developed magic and was etched into the Continent's history.

...And Alexander was the legendary undying mercenary who travelled from battlefield to battlefield.

A legendary swordsman who journeyed as freely as a Halfling, and sometimes overthrew monsters and thieves.

It was a certain winter day he visited the Kingdom and asked his old friend.

[Alex, I won't ask about you... you're still the same as usual.]

That day, the great sage was delighted with his reunion with Alexander for the first time in decades.

[Yup. You also haven't changed, Al... is what I wanted to say, but you're getting old now. You're perfectly an old man.]

Alexander said without mincing his words.

It's been 70 years since that battle.

A young genius magician, who once had a face comparable to Alexander, had become an old man like a dead tree that could break any moment.

[...You really haven't changed at all.]

That's right. Alex who was already 70 years old at that time was such a fellow, he often argued with himself and a young Leon.

Even such reminiscence made him felt nostalgic, and now he felt hungry.

Perhaps it's because he's "old" now.

[So, what do you want today? For you to come visiting a man, is there something wrong?]

With his mind corrected, Artorius asked.

When they were journeying together, the man boasted "I've embraced a real princess before", but not afraid to dump a woman if there was too much work.

He wouldn't come unless there's something he wanted to do.

He probably hadn't changed since 70 years ago.

[...Un. You always get straight into the matter.]

Even though he looked weak, he confirmed that his friend's mind was still sharp, and Alexander told him why he came all the way to the Kingdom.

[Actually... I want to go to otherworld dining hall. There's something I want to eat for a while.]

He only heard the rumours from Halflings and other adventurers.

A restaurant of a strange world that appeared once in 7 days and the delicious foreign food offered by it.

And there, whenever people visited, was an old mage similar to a dead tree... the great wiseman that was a living legend.

[...I see.]

Artorius was convinced.

He had never seen Alexander in otherworld dining hall for the last 30 years.

So Artorius was certain that he had never been there before.

[If that's the case, then I'll bring you... tomorrow evening.]

It was a request from a former comrade... a friend that protected each other's backs with their lives.

Artorius agreed... while making amendments with his genius brain.

[Evening? Why?]

Alexander asked curiously.

[...Umu. There are customers that will likely not react well if they see you. Wait till they return home.]

As he answered, two regulars came to Artorius' mind.

If his womanizing friend tried to chat up with the princess of Empire, he could make the prince of a foreign country angry. Not to mention, he heard that the demon gladiator lost to Alexander.

That restaurant was also important to Artorius.

He didn't want to cause extraordinary commotion.

The next evening.

Using the magic circle engraved in Artorius' laboratory, they passed through the door.

'Chirinchirin', with the sound of bell, they entered the other world.

[Welcome... oya, I thought you're not coming today.]

The owner looked at Artorius and said in surprise.

As far as the owner knew, the oldest regulars among the all the customers usually came at noon or near the closing time.

It was rare for him to show up when the sun was descending.

[No way. I brought a companion today.]

After he coughed once, Alexander, who smelled of woman's perfume and was with him from morning to evening, greeted the owner.

[Yo! You're the foreign chef, huh! I'm... well, even if I give you my name, you wouldn't know it. Anyway, best regards!]

[Ha, haa. Nice to meet you too.]

Despite puzzled by the sudden light greeting, the owner bowed his head.

[Well, he's not a bad guy. Take care of him.]

Artorius interceded while coldly sweating due to Alexander.

[No problem. It's better for young people to be energetic... well, what do you want to order?]

The owner asked Artorius for the order without knowing that Alexander was roughly twice the age of Artorius.

As usual, he didn't bother to ask.

The usual roast cutlet and beer.

That's it.

But this time he had a companion.

For a first time customer, he did not know what he liked.

[Aa, it's the usual for me...]

[Croquettes for me. As for my drink, the same as this grandpa's.]

Alexander answered clearly.

[...Oh right, you did say there's something you want to eat.]

To that unrepentant attitude, Artorius remembered what Alexander said yesterday.

Croquettes.

It was a memorable dish that a deceased regular had never given up saying that it was the most delicious deep-fried dish.

According to a rumour he heard, there was a dish made by regular cooks of the Empire named croquettes.

(I see. So his target is the other world's croquette...)

Artorius was convinced.

As far as Artorius knew, Alexander was so curious that it was more fitting for him to be a child of Halfling rather than an elf.

His curiosity might be the reason he ordered the croquette that he had never seen before.

[I understand. Your orders are croquettes and roast cutlets. Please wait a moment.]

The owner took the order and returned to the kitchen.

[...Well, this way.]

Artorius led Alexander to his usual seat.

[...Ou.]

Alexander looked over the restaurant as a “precaution” while he followed Artorius.

[Is something the matter? There seems to be something in your mind.]

[Aa.]

To those words, Alexander knew that Artorius was “unaware” of it and became more alert.

[...Hey. That elf woman sitting over there, isn't she dangerous?]

[...!? E, err, she's here again?]

Artorius instinctively followed Alexander's line of sight.

She's there.

A female elf wearing a black version of otherworld costume quietly sitting in a corner seat.

...During the first time, even “Curry Rice” who was a veteran warrior could not sense here.

If it's not because of Alexander, he wouldn't even notice her.

[...]

The woman did not utter a word, just moving her hand like an ancient magic apparatus or something similar to eat chicken curry.

...Every time her plate became empty, it seemed that she directly transmitted her thoughts to the demon waitress as she suddenly answered and brought another serving.

[Un. She's dangerous. She's someone that you should absolutely never turn into an enemy...]

Alexander who had a sharp intuition that he honed in battlefields for the last 100 years sank to his seat with a cold sweat.

He understood. He would be no match if he ever fought against her.

[Aa, I guess.]

Artorius agreed with Alexander.

Artorius also knew that ever since 7 days ago when he first saw her.

That's the sort of being that one should never turn into an enemy... perhaps she was even stronger than the Evil God that they defeated before.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. Here are your croquettes and roast cutlets. And your draft beers too.]

It was the owner's voice that broke the heavy silence.

With thinly sliced leafy green vegetable on each plate, the owner brought roast cutlets and croquettes along with two mugs of golden draft beers.



[...Goo, good. Shall we eat?]

[A, that's right. Un, it looks delicious, these otherworld croquettes.]

Utilizing this delicious opportunity, they decided to forget the figure they just saw.

As long as they didn't interact poorly with that existence, they shouldn't worry about her.

In fact, with the exception of the owner and the waitress, Artorius and Alexander were

the only customers that were aware of her presence.

And Alexander finally saw it.

[Hee... so this is the real croquette?]

Before Alexander were the elliptical, wheat-coloured croquettes.

It seemed to be fried with fragrant oil as a slight scent of oil wafted from it.

[Let's eat...]

Alexander used a fork and a knife to cut the croquette while swallowing his saliva.

The croquette was cut easily, arousing a good feeling.

From the cross section, white mashed Baron's fruit mixed with something brown could be seen.

The vivid contrast between white and brown was excellent, and Alexander brought the piece to his mouth.

Spreading inside his mouth was the taste of fragrant coating, the slightly sweet Baron's fruit seasoned with spices, salt and butter, and the odorless, good quality oil.

Apparently the brown thing mixed inside was minced meat, and from it, the meat fat oozed out enhancing the croquette's taste.

(...Un, as I thought, this is different.)

To that taste beyond his expectation, Alexander washed the oil in his mouth with a gulp of his beer.

To Alexander's knowledge, the Empire's "croquette" was something made from mixing mashed Baron's fruit with salt and coated it with flour dissolved in water.

It was the taste of commoners that could be purchased mainly from food stalls.

It was good when it was freshly fried especially during cold winters, but this was exceptional.

(No wonder he's addicted to this.)

Alexander thought while the taste of croquette spread inside his mouth every time he took a bite.

In the first place, the reason why Alexander wanted to try the otherworld croquette was because of a story he heard from a middle-aged Halfling that happened to be his acquaintance.

A story of a deceased man who loved “croquettes” of the otherworld dining hall, told as a story at a bar.

The Halfling laughingly said “Croquette built a huge castle at the place where one of the doors was located in this wide world”.

He noticed it at once. The identity of the man referred as Croquette.

...That was why Alexander travelled to the Kingdom and visited his friend to ask a favour.

[That’s not right, Alex. Sauce is the life of croquettes.]

While thinking such, Artorius admonished Alexander.

[Sauce?]

[Umu. It’s indispensable for otherworld fried food... this is it.]

Artorius handed a red bottle to Alexander who tilted his head after hearing that unknown word.

[Try it. It’s absolutely delicious for this restaurant’s fried food.]

That made him laugh.

There was a strong rival of tartar sauce for deep-fried seafood, but sauce was important for other deep-fried food.

[I see. Then...]

Alexander nodded and tilted the bottle.

Leaking from the bottle was a brownish black sauce.

It slowly spilled from the bottle’s mouth, leaving a brown stain on the croquette.

That part of croquette entered Alexander's mouth...

[...I see. Certainly, there's a large difference if I use the sauce.]

He nodded to that taste.

At first, there was a sour taste similar to vinegar. But not only that, there were also saltiness, the sharp taste of spices and a hint of sweetness in the complex sauce.

A mere moment when the too strong taste was mixed with the deep-fried food and the taste of oil in the coating, the taste became balanced like a miracle and spread inside his mouth.

(I see... croquettes are definitely something that should be eaten with the sauce.)

He became aware of that while continuing to stuff mouthful after mouthful of croquettes into his mouth.

Croquettes were delicious when eaten alone, but when sauce was used, it became a different taste altogether.

At least Alexander liked it.

[It's a pity. Is there no way to get this food in our world?]

[Umu. This world's sauce cannot be made in our world yet. Even Yomi agreed.]

Artorius responded in a good mood.

...Also in order to tell an important news to his friend.

[...Yomi?]

At the moment he heard that name, Alexander immediately stopped eating.

Feeling surprised, he looked at Artorius whose eyes showed that he was not telling any lies.

Why did that name come out now?

Yes, his eyes asked that.

[Aa, that Yomi... she's still alive.]

Feeling comfortable seeing his comrade's surprise, Artorius remembered his reunion 30 years ago...

He replied while remembering the first time he visited the restaurant.

[Aa, it seems that she was flung into this world by the Evil God 70 years ago.

When I saw her again, she had completely become a resident of this world... she even has a grandson now.]

He looked at the owner who was busy going back and forth from the kitchen to the dining room while replying so.

[...Is the owner Yomi's grandson? ...He doesn't seem to be able to wield a sword or use magic though.]

Only by that, Alexander recognized the meaning of Artorius' reply and said his doubts.

The owner that he saw earlier.

If he considered the taste of the croquette he ate, his cooking skill was good, but the way his muscles were developed was not that of a warrior, and his magical power was weak.

Even by his looks, he was only a chef, and both his swordsmanship and magic skill were not what one could expect from the grandson of a genius.

[Of course. In this world, both swordsmanship and magic are useless. There's no way she could teach him.]

Artorius smiled wryly to his friend's words.

When he met her again that day, Yomi said so with a serious expression.

—He does not need swordsmanship or magic over here, but I want him to inherit only the cooking skill.

Those words became reality. Yomi's grandson... the owner could not handle any sword or magic at all, but his cooking skill was peerless.

[That's the case. Yomi is Yomi and she seemed to enjoy her life here.]

Yomi's smile when he met her 30 years ago was natural... unlike when they travelled together, the only thing in her head was to kill the demon tribe and her heart was empty.

Artorius felt great pleasure and a little loneliness seeing his former comrade who changed as if she was an "ordinary human" now.

[I see... Yomi had an enjoyable life in her own way, huh...]

Hearing that, Alexander also felt relieved.

Back then, Yomi said that "I was born to kill the demon king" with a serious expression, the only thing she had in her thoughts was to kill the demons.

When the demon king and the Evil God were killed, she disappeared from the world without experiencing enjoyable things... an important comrade thought so.

It was good news that she survived and lived happily in the otherworld.

[I see... ok, let's drink. To celebrate that Yomi survived.]

[That's right. Let's thank this world that accepted Yomi... excuse me, owner. Another serving of croquettes and roast cutlets.]

Artorius nodded to Alexander's proposal.

And the two continued to eat and drink until late night.

The day after they visited otherworld dining hall.

[Well then, you've taken care of me in various ways. Thank you.]

[Aa, come visit me again. Especially on Satur's day.]

As he had experience the thing that caught his interest for many years and heard an unexpected good news, Alexander decided to travel again.

He decided to go as far as the wind blew.

That was Alexander's way of life.

[Well, for sightseeing, let's visit Ady's and my son's graves. I have considered visiting that place before after all.]

Thinking a little, he easily decided the designation of his next travel.

His next destination was the Empire.

There, he would pray for his former lover and son who rested in one of the most luxurious mausoleums of the continent, which became one of the Empire's symbols.

There was a carving that said "I have no father. As a son, I only have my mother Adelheid as my parent" on the grave. It was a reminder that he hated nowadays.

He would also tell that he had eaten the croquettes that his son loved more than anything in that restaurant.

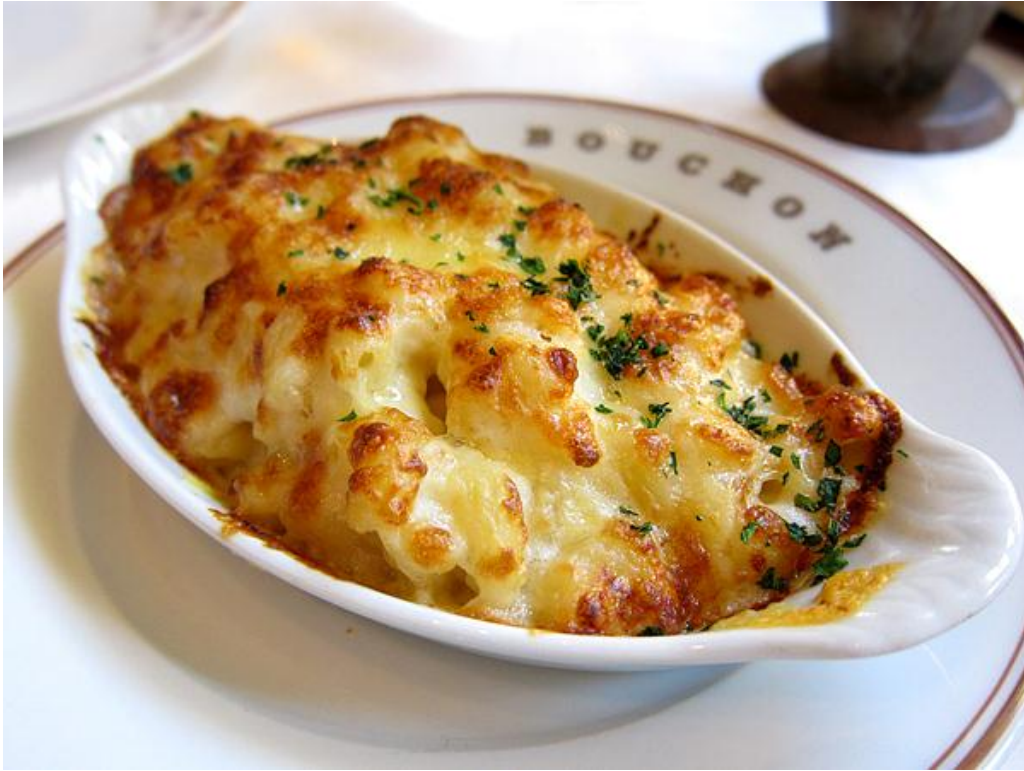
(It was my son that died earlier than his father, and that's good enough.)

Alexander left while thinking such a thing.

That day, ever since the day he rescued his former lover and his son from the former Empire capital with the cooperation of his comrades, he went to visit the graves of his former lover and his son that had never met him.

CHAPTER 52

MACARONI GRATIN



A small inn in a small town of a small country was busy that day.

[O~i! another serving of knight's stew!] [Here too! Two servings! More meat! Beer and bread too!]

[Excuse me~, bill please~.]

[Yes, yes! Right away!]

Myla walked around the bar delivering food and drinks, receiving money from the customers, and cleared the tables after the customers went away.

They had hired a new server, but it was so busy that it made one's eyes spin.

Although the inn opened at dawn, until the closing time at the end of the day when the sun was setting, customers like a traveler who headed towards the Capital and a husband who had finished his work would come constantly.

In addition, the inn was also popular, and now it seemed that there were customers who had chosen to lodge at the inn while knowing that it took half a day to arrive at the nearest city.

That and thanks to “knight’s stew” as only their inn sold it at that town.



The trick was thanks to a Halfling couple who came to the town around a year ago.

They travelled around while purchasing food ingredients in the market and sold cooked foods as chefs.

When they first arrived at the town and made “knight’s stew”, Myla’s father, Rauli, ate it and it triggered his business intuition.

He asked the couple who made a potful of stew to sell as their merchandise when customer traffic was quite high to sell the recipe to him.

At first, when Myla’s father heard that the price he needed to pay was half a month of the inn’s earnings... which was 100 silver coins, he fainted.

As the inn was not that popular, they had no money to spare.

However, Rauli’s judgment was correct, as a result of putting the knight’s stew in the

menu, their customer increased more than twice the original amount and they made a lot of savings.

(My father said “I thought I could sell it at the inn when I first ate it”).

And during afternoon.

[Yoshi... we're out of ingredients, so that's it for today. Myla, you can take a break until evening.]

[Ye~s, call me later then.]

As the large pot of stew prepared at the morning was then empty, Rauli said so to Myla.

At this inn, other dishes like sausages with Baron's fruit, simple soups and alcoholic beverages were served, but the selling point of the inn was the knight's stew.



If it was absent, then the customer traffic would lessen.

As a matter of course, they would make another pot, but they would leave the rest of the work to other servers until the evening when it would be ready, so Myla could take a rest.

Her weak mother had died due to a disease, and Myla was an only child.

Therefore when Myla took in a husband, he would succeed the inn.

If she collapsed, then there would be no one that could inherit the inn.

That's why, even while being charged with innkeeper work, Myla had free time.

[U~, so tired...]

The town was a rural town with no entertainment, so she had nothing to do when she had free time.

Myla returned to her room on the first floor and collapsed on her bed.

[It's good to make money, but I should take care of my health when I'm too busy.]

She said such while lying flat on her bed.

For a moment, she missed the old days when she was free.

In those evenings, there was no problem for her to take a nap until customers arrived.

...However, it was true that she honestly didn't want to go back to when she and her father would look at their account book every day.

It was when she was thinking such.

[O~i, Myla, you there?]

She heard a call from outside of her window.

[Is something the matter, Johan?]

Myla replied, raising her face from the bed.

There was a familiar face of Johan, the second son of a baker whose age was similar to hers, who lowered an old sword borrowed from the town's vigilante to his waist.

[Actually, I found an awesome restaurant. Do you want to go together?]

Myla confirmed while turning to face him, and immediately asked Johan.

[An awesome restaurant? ...Is there such a place here?]

Myla tilted her head hearing his words.

Myla had lived in this town ever since she was born, and the amount of time she left the town could be counted with both hands.

She was familiar with this town, but she didn't know about Johan's "awesome

restaurant”.

[Aa, I found it not long ago, it's a bit weird... but the food there is really delicious. Are you in?]

[How preposterous... well, you don't seem to be lying...]

She had served the inn's customers.

Johan didn't seem to be lying.

...And, he was the type that was more brawn than brain, so his intellect was not excellent.

[...Well, alright. I have a break until the evening, so if it's only until then, then it's fine.]

[Ou! You have to come! Let's go quickly! I've been looking forward to going there since this morning so I'm famished!]

Johan hold out his hand just like back when they were children.

[That's right. You always go immediately after you decided.]

Myla took his hand naturally, and both of them took off.

They walked for a while.

[...Hey, Johan. Perhaps, I am being deceived?]

Myla asked Johan as they walked through the forest where children were forbidden to approach as a wolf was sometimes sighted.

[Why are we in the forest when we're going to have a meal?]

Two people of a similar age alone in an unpopular forest and one of them was a young man.

It's a situation where a young woman like her couldn't help but being uneasy, never mind that Johan was her childhood friend.

[I'm not lying! The awesome restaurant is ahead.]

But apparently Johan didn't care about all that.

What could be heard from his enthusiastic voice was no doubt appetite.

At least it seemed that there was no lie in “the awesome restaurant is ahead”.

[I mean, why do you know that there is a restaurant in such a place?]

Johan didn't seem to be telling a lie, but the mystery deepened.

Why was there a restaurant in the forest?

And why did Johan went to the place where the restaurant was?

[Aa, around a year ago, the chefs Halfling couple? Those guys who made the stew at your family's inn.]

To answer Myla's doubts, Johan talked about the couple that was Myra's family's benefactors.

Including the chance on how he discovered “that restaurant”.

[I heard it from the adults, but when they stayed at the town, they went to the forest while singing a strange song.]

If it was only that, he would miss it.

Because humans couldn't understand Halflings who spent their lives travelling around the world without any place to call home.

[However, I noticed it when going around the town. Halflings that came to our town always went to the forest.]

Yes, Halflings visited the town quite often.

The Halflings that cooked were only those couple, but roughly once every few months, Halflings stopped at the town during their journey.

They usually shopped at the town and went to the forest without stopping at the inn.

...When he talked to a warrior that was escorting a noble, he heard from him that Halflings came to his town once a year.

Too many Halflings visited this town.

[I thought that there was something at the forest and went all the way to the back.]

And he found it.

[...What is that? Why is there a door in the forest?]

Myla was surprised seeing a well-maintained black door floating in the dark of the forest.

[Ou, that's our destination. The purveyor of Halflings called Nekoya.]

That's what Johan explained to Myla, being in good mood seeing her shocked face similar to his 7 days ago.

'Chirinchirin', while listening to the sound of the bell, they went through the door.

[A! Welcome! Please have a seat!]

At the same time, a girl wearing an unusual hair ornament with tailor-made clothes that boldly exposed the legs from knee down while carrying a somewhat large book cheerfully greeted them.

[Etto, Johan-san is able to read the menu right? Here is the menu. Please let me know if you have decided what to order... yes! I'll be there soon!]

They were prompted to seat at a well-maintained seat; the waitress gently placed the book on the table and went to attend another table.

[...What is that?]

Myla murmured, as if somewhat disappointed.

[It's something like a different world costume. It's somewhat embarrassing, but here it's normal.]

To such Myla, Johan elaborated that the waitress (it seemed her name was Aletta) had served him at the restaurant before.

[A different world? ...Perhaps, is this a different world?]

[I guess. It seems that this is called the otherworld dining hall because it's in a different world... eh? Did I not say that?]

In response to Myla's question, Johan remembered that he had forgotten to explain what this place was to Myla.

[I have not heard of it.]

Myla sighed at her longtime childhood friend and proceeded to browse the interior of

the restaurant.

[...It's somewhat obviously strange here.]

When she looked at it, it clearly showed that the clientele were strange.

...Rather than an ordinary customer of an ordinary family, there were noble customers wearing expensive clothes that Myla would likely never could afford in her lifetime, an elderly man who seemed to be a magician, a group of young priestess and warriors that seemed to be 100 times stronger than Johan.

There were also customers that were obviously not humans, small dwarves and fairies, a lizardman, monsters such as two teens with wings and a woman with the lower body of a snake. There were no such beings in Myla's world.

She was convinced that this was another world because such occurrence was unlikely, Myla then opened the book on the desk and read it.

There were descriptions of various foods written beautifully in the familiar language of Samanak.

She would not try to eat those with unfamiliar names and descriptions, but there was one thing she knew for the time being.

[...The price is a bit higher than usual.]

Added to the descriptions, the price of the food was higher than Myla's inn where even Johan's small pocket money could afford it.

In other words, it was the price for commoners; it was not a restaurant for people like nobles where one cup of alcohol could amount to 1 silver coin.

(I don't care that among the customers there were a lot of wealthy nobles.)

[It's different. Here you could have all-you-can-eat bread that was even more delicious than the ones sold at the bakery as long as you order a food item for 1 silver coin.]

However Johan overturned Myla's thoughts quite easily.

[E!? Are you sure!?!]

[It's this restaurant's policy. You can eat bread or rice as much as you want.]

Impossible.

To Myla who had a floating facial expression, Johan pointed to one menu that he tried 7 days ago.

[This is my recommendation. It's as tasty as knight's stew.]

Last time, this came out when he ordered for something "cheap", now he would order it from the beginning.

While thinking that Myla would definitely like it.

And Myla looked at the words pointed by Johan.

[...Macaroni Gratin?]

It was accompanied with description that it was a dish with knight's sauce and topped with baked cheese.

He called the waitress to tell their order and waited.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. Here are your macaroni gratins. Be careful as it is hot.]



A middle-aged man who seemed to be the owner of the restaurant brought the food along with glossy breads the size of a palm.

It was served in a deep dish that seemed thick and durable.

It did seem hot as the dish emitted small boiling sounds.

[Good! I've been waiting!]

He cheered seeing the dish that he had eaten 7 days ago.

After eating this 7 days ago, he became addicted to it and did not want to eat any other food at this restaurant.

[Please enjoy.]

Smiling wryly seeing the enthusiastic youngster, the owner returned to the kitchen.

[Yeah! Let's eat... ah!? But it's delicious! ...Myla, eat it after it cools. It's delicious.]

After saying that, Johan picked up a fork and started to eat.

He exhaled a hot breath to expel the heat in his mouth, but his fork didn't stop.

(...It seems hot, so I'll start with the bread.)

Myla who realized that the dish was hot after seeing Johan ate it started with the "all-you-can-eat" bread.

(A, delicious...)

Myla's face loosened when eating the freshly baked bread with crunchy crust and fluffy content.

The inside of the bread was white like a snow, and she knew that it was definitely a white bread made with fine wheat.

In addition to salt, water, butter and milk, it was kneaded together with high quality sugar until they were thoroughly mixed. It was not a lie when Johan said "it was so good that it could amount to 1 silver coin".

[...Hey, isn't the otherworld awesome?]

Johan laughed while asking for Myla's confirmation.

[You're right...]

Myla must admit it.

Even this one bread was worth the price she saw earlier.

She felt it was terrible that the “otherworld restaurant” sold it almost for free compared to “regular restaurant”.

[Try the macaroni gratin as soon as possible. I brought you here so that you can try it.]

[Un. Okay...]

To Johan’s words, Myla picked up a fork and tried the main dish of macaroni gratin.

Apparently it was hard to cool due to the thick pottery vessel; the macaroni gratin was still hot though some time had passed.

She gently inserted the fork into it.

By pressing in the fork, the layer of brown cheese stretched thinly over the macaroni gratin broke.

Peeping from inside was the white colour of knight’s sauce.

Seeing the bright colour made Myla’s expectation to rise.

She scooped the food with her fork... and carried it to her mouth.

(Hot!? ...But, delicious!)

After breathing out to expel the heat from her mouth, Myla chewed to taste the food.

(Ingredients are cheese and knight’s sauce, and...)

First of all, the flavor of cheese. The baked cheese was so fragrant that it left a pleasant acidity in her mouth.

Then the rich flavor of knight’s sauce was left.

The taste of milk and butter were thicker and richer compared to the knight’s sauce made by Myla’s inn.

And the sourness of cheese and sweetness of knight’s sauce mixed together in the mouth and complimented each other.

(There’s oranie, chicken meat, mushrooms and... pasta? I wonder if this is macaroni.)

And the ingredients contained by that sauce were also incredible.

Firmly baked by fire, the oranie melted leaving sweetness behind causing the taste of milk to be drawn out.

The chicken meat used was the breast part where one could enjoy its taste and texture.

And included in the flavor of the sauce was the meatiness of mushroom.

And, the noodle made from flour had smooth texture.

(This pasta... macaroni is delicious...)

The deliciousness of the pasta was because of its hole.

Due to its unique shape, the rich sauce was firmly entangled with the pasta.

Further chewing made the sauce jammed inside the hole to overflow in her mouth.

[Well, how was it? Isn't it delicious?]

[Un. This is really delicious.]

Myla answered with a smile to Johan who was wiping the remaining sauce in the dish with his bread.

Surely, this was a dish suitable to be served in an "awesome restaurant".

At the same time.

[...I wonder if I can serve this in my inn.]

Inside her head, such a thought suddenly entered her mind.

Baked cheese on top of knight's sauce containing plenty of ingredients.

...If she could serve this in her inn, surely the amount of customers would increase.

[Seriously!? If you can make it, I'll come every day!]

To Myla's murmur, Johan exclaimed happily.

For Johan, there was nothing better than being able to eat otherworld dish in his neighbor's inn.

[Is that so... un. Then, I'll try.]

Boosted by Johan's words, Myla secretly decided.

Making the pasta would be difficult, but she would try to do so nonetheless.

(I wonder if father felt like this when he learnt how to do knight's stew...)

It would be amazing if she could.

With such excitement, Myla tasted it further to "steal" the taste.

CHAPTER 53

BIRTHDAY CAKE



That day, Ellen's family was particularly joyful.

[Nee, okaa-san, let's hurry.]

[Wait please. Today is your day. You have to dress up.]

The leading role of today's feast... Ellen looked sharply at the 9 years old Bona who was dressed specially in beautifully knitted clothes.

The feast of "children's blessings" which was usually held at New Year Festival.

As one did not know when they would die, this festival was held to show that they were "full-fledged children" that had passed the dangerous small children phase and

were able to be taught how to do housework by their parents, though it was unlike the festival that was grandly held when one turned 15 years old and became an adult.

Before the official celebration was conducted, Ellen's family decided to hold their own private celebration at otherworld dining hall.

Ellen gave birth to five children, but only Kai and Bona were greeted with children's blessings when they were 9 years old.

The first born was a sickly girl that could not survive through her fifth winter.

She was careless with the second born as he was a boy with strong body. He died when he fell down the tree very badly when he was 7 years old.

She still didn't know what caused the fifth child to die.

Before she slept, she was full with Ellen's milk. When Ellen woke up the next morning, her body was already cold.

Then, only Kai and Bona were left.

That's why, 3 years ago, the couple decided to celebrate grandly when Kai, their third child, had managed to reach 9 years old.

In the restaurant, Ellen paid the owner 10 silver coins from the family's little savings and asked for a "special celebration".

The owner responded admirably to their request.

A variety of feast arranged on the table for four people.

No matter how much alcohol or sweet beverages they drank, the price remained the same.

And coming out at the end was a dessert that was so sweet and soft that it melted on their tongue.

It was a treat that was suitable for the amount of coins they paid.

...As it was too amazing, Bona who was 6 years old then still remembered it and she asked for a celebration "same as onii-chan" 3 years before.

Thus, Bona's 9 years old celebration was also held at Nekoya and Ellen allowed it.

[Eee... I'm looking forward to it. The "cake" that we ate was really amazing.]

While her hair was prepared by Ellen, Bona was thinking about the feast.

As Bona was still 9 years old, her appetite was still larger than her sex appeal.

3 years ago, all the food they ate was delicious, but she still couldn't forget the dessert that they had only eaten once before.

That cake was amazingly large and it melted in her mouth.

Even now, she still dreamed of eating plenty of that sweet confection.

Usually, mother who wore sparkling clothes over there said that it was something that "people who had different living conditions" could eat.

Just thinking that made it more exciting than New Year Festival.

[Nee, okaa-san! Are you finished!?!]

She did not care that she had to clean and braid her hair.

Bona wanted to go to that place as soon as possible.

With such a feeling, Bona threw a tantrum midway.

[...There, it's finished. Un, you look beautiful. How charming.]

While smiling wryly at Bona's complaint, Ellen nodded after she finished braiding her hair.

Her hair was washed with lukewarm water boiled with precious firewood and was carefully braided.

Together with her new clothes that were sewn for children's blessing over the year, her daughter was pretty like a fairy that lived in a forest.

[Oo! Finally finished! Ok, let's go!]

[Okay! Let's go quickly, kaa-chan!]

Hermann and Kai encouraged Ellen to go as soon as possible.

The two men were really desperate.

Anyway, they were having a feast today, so they only drank water in the morning.

Their bellies were empty, making them running out of patience.

[Okaa-san! Hurry up! I'm hungry!]

And young Bona sided with them.

[...Yes, yes. I understand. Let's go.]

Ellen who was ganged up by her family sighed and decided to head out to their celebration feast.

Just as the sun reached its peak, they reached their barn.

'Chirinchirin', they went through the door while listening to the bell.

[Welcome! Please have a seat!]

When they came, Aletta cheerfully greeted them and led them to a table.

A reserved table for "party use".

The four of them sat on that table with the sign "reserved seats" though Aletta couldn't read it.

[I will bring your food as soon as possible! Also, what would you like to drink?]

[Yoshi, first is beer... no, that's it! Distilled liquor! Give me whiskey!]

[Aa, wine for me please...]

[Cola for me!]

[Me too!]

Today's price for beverages would be a set amount no matter how much they drank.

As they were promised that, they ordered more drinks more than usual.

[Yes, I understand! Please wait a moment! I'll serve your food soon.]

Aletta returned to the kitchen after giving them a cheerful smile.

[Master! Ellen and her family are here!] *{TN: Aletta calls the owner master. So this is not the master of the bar upstairs.}*

[Ou. Understood.]

The owner nodded and moved per Aletta's report.

In addition to usual cuisine, a number of party food centered around classic dishes of that time period.

He began the finishing touches while waiting the cold dishes to become cold enough and warm dishes to be hot.

(Well then, I hope they're happy with this.)

He glanced at the fridge while doing final presentations for the dishes.

Unlike the usual dessert, this was the first time it was ordered in 3 years.

But for Flying Puppy who made the cake, it was a classic item for most cake shops.

The timing for presenting it should be carefully monitored.

The owner and Aletta one by one arranged the dishes side by side.

[It's here...!] [It truly is luxurious...] [Awesome!] [Waa!]

Those four swallowed their spit looking at the luxurious foods.

Roasted chicken, made by roasting whole plump, fat chicken.



Poured on it was brown sauce containing vinegar, with a garnish of fried thinly sliced Baron's fruit along with raw vegetables that could be harvested during midwinter.

Potage soup made with milk and yellowish grains of corn that emitted a faintly sweet scent.



Deep-fried shellfish like scallops and shrimps were lined up one by one, still faintly smelling of fried oil.



A pale yellow omelet packed with smoked meat and cheese, a vivid red sauce poured over it.



Served on large plate were small sandwiches containing mashed Baron's fruit, chopped Cule, pickled fish and eggs seasoned with mayonnaise.



With the dishes arranged closely to each other on the table, their eyes zeroed on the food and their stomachs grumbled.

If people looked closely, the other customers seemed to involuntarily watch the assortment of foods on the table.

[Well then, I'll serve the cake at the end of the meal... please enjoy and have fun.]

Looking at Ellen's family, the owner decided to only speak a few words.

The family of four immediately went to grab the food that they wanted.

All the foods for the feast were delicious.

The roast chicken contained plenty of fat beneath its skin. Eaten with the gravy made from its meat juice, the taste of chicken meat was packed with the sweet and sour sauce along with the scent of herbs stuffed in its belly.

Fresh raw vegetables that could be eaten steadily thanks to the sour sauce and the salty Baron's fruit.

Soup made of sweet yellow corn warmed the body with its sweetness.

Fried seafood that was very compatible with the tartar sauce placed on the middle of the plate, though usually such ingredients did not contain much flavor.

A perfectly cooked omelet that melted in their mouth.

A sandwich that made people could enjoy various ingredients coloured with the softness of fine white bread and the acidity of mayonnaise.

Sweet delicious drinks that they could drink however much they wanted.

They silently enjoyed their delicious feast.

They did not utter any word.

...The more silent they were, the more delicious it was.

(Delicious... but, I have to be patient.)

Meanwhile, Bona had to resist the urge to eat more and more food and had to eat little by little.

Of course, she wanted to eat all of it. But she must resist.

Bona knew.

After this, the treat that would come out last was something that Bona had dreamt of eating for the last 3 years.

If she missed this opportunity, she would have to wait until her brother became an adult.

Best food with the best stomach condition.

It was a hard decision 3 years ago that Bona was only able to eat half a portion as the rest was eaten by her brother.

And then it came.

[Excuse me! Would you like your cake to be served now?]

After seeing that the food was finished, Aletta came to ask while tidying the table.

[That's right... ok. Please.]

(It's here!)

Bona responded to her mother's words.

[Very well, please wait a moment.]

After saying so, Aletta quickly lifted the empty plates and retreated to the kitchen.

(Not yet, not yet...)

She felt restless.

The thing she had wanted for a long time.

That's it.

[Thank you for waiting. Here's your birthday cake.]

For Bona it was her dream dessert that she could only eat during a time of celebration.

The size was big enough for Aletta to carry it with both hands, a special dessert that needs "reservation" in otherworld dining hall.

[...Ara. It's quite large.]

[Ano, Victoria-sama, that kind of cake, you have seen it before?]

[...No, this is also my first time. If it's just the size, then it's the same as whole cakes available for takeaway. But I have never seen a cake with so much decoration before.]

[Celestine-sama... that is.]

[I don't know. However, it looks delicious... no, it looks beautiful.]

[It's rather amazing isn't it? Do you think that doll or that plate could be eaten?]

[...The possibility is high. If the cake decorations could be eaten, then it's tasty.]

Conversations could be heard from nearby tables.

When Bona caught a glimpse, they came from customers who usually eat confectionaries in the restaurant.

Okaa-san always said that “there were different people in this world”.

While knowing that their eyes were looking at the cake, Bona’s gaze was also nailed on it.

It looked like a piece of art while being a confectionary.

It had white cream and red strawberries decorating the round shape



As the cream covered the whole surface in a pure white state, white powder and red strawberries were used to draw a complicated pattern as if snow was piled up on top of the pure white cake.

On the center were a brown pattern and four dolls.

[Waaaaa.]

[Isn’t it great, young lady? This cake is made for you.]

While Bona was exclaiming her wonder, the owner handed a cake knife to Ellen.

[Shall I cut it?]

[No, I’ll do it. Excuse me, could you lend me a knife?]

Ellen took the knife from the owner while shaking her head to the owner’s offer.

(...Well.)

To be honest, Ellen thought that it was sacrilegious to cut it while she divided the cake.

She just cut it from the plate on the center (which Kai said was delicious and very sweet when he ate it before) to the edge of the cake.

Each of them got one doll.

...And only one slice on which the size of the divided plate on the center was bigger than other slices.

The other three's gazes were nailed on the extraordinarily large cake while Ellen divided it.

[Kaa-chan! I want this!]

[Wait! First of all, tou-chan gets to choose...]

[Wait. Have you forgotten what's important?]

Ellen sharply asked both males that stretched their hands towards the largest slice.

[The main character of today's celebration is Bona. Bona gets to choose first. Which one do you want?]

She smiled at Bona.

There's no need for her to answer, really.

[Yay! Cake, cake!]

A big slice of cake was placed in front of Bona.

While shouting in joy, Bona started on it.

[Well then, this!]

The first thing she ate was the white board with brown pattern on it.

3 years ago, she couldn't eat it because Kai hogged it all.

Her brother said that it was amazingly sweet and tasty.

The owner seemed to write words to celebrate Bona's birthday, but to Bona, this was

not important.

[Hoo! Sweet! What is this!?!]

The taste was tastier than she expected.

She nibbled on it. The plate then snapped.

It tasted slightly like milk, it was sweeter than anything Bona had ever eaten and melted in her mouth.

Being absorbed in the taste, Bona finished it in a blink of eye before Kai became envious.

[A, it's gone...]

She felt sorry for a little bit, but she corrected herself.

(But, the cake is still there!)

Yes, the leading role was not yet eaten.

Bona unconsciously recalled the taste 3 years ago and cut a small piece with her fork.

In order to enjoy it, she would eat it slowly.

She drank her saliva... and ate the cake.

(Aa... delicious...)

At the moment, that vivid memory spread in her mouth.

Surely the taste that she imagined in her dreams for the past 3 years was in her mouth.

In her mouth was the soft and sweet taste of the yellow foundation along with the soft and fluffy white cream that taste like milk.

The fruit juice containing different sweetness than the cream overflowed every time she chewed on the syrup that was sandwiched with the cream between the cake layers.

The red berry contained sourness along with its sweetness.

By combining these, Bona was fascinated with the cake.

No matter when, this sweet cake was like a sweet dream.

In that dream, Bona became addicted with it.

That was the moment of bliss that Bona had waited for 3 years.

Eventually, the dream had to end.

[...A, it's gone...]

Finally, after the red berry that was sprinkled the sugar and the crisp candy dolls, Bona's plate was empty.

Such a big slice of cake was finished quickly.

The only things left behind were the feeling of full stomach and loneliness.

(I wish I had more...)

While wishing that, Bona looked at her family.

[...Fuu, I ate it, I ate it.]

[U~, I can't eat anymore...]

[The food here is really delicious.]

Everyone was smiling.

She wore beautiful clothes and ate delicious foods.

She smiled in a satisfied way.

[Yoshi, would you like to be here longer or do you want to go home?]

[That's right. My belly is bursting.]

[Uwaa... I ate too much... nee-chan, another cup!]

A loving family that exchanged words with a smile.

[Un. This is really nice... I also want another cola.]

In that situation, Bona smiled naturally, and the best day of her life passed slowly.

CHAPTER 54

KAKIAGE SOBA



The time was 10 p.m.

The owner finished cleaning muttered while feeling liberated.

[Yareyare. It seems that we finished this year successfully.]

For the otherworld dining hall “Nekoya”, special days like New Year holidays, Golden Week¹ and Obon² festival were holidays.

During New Year holidays, nearby offices, high schools and universities would close, so opening the restaurant would cause a huge deficit.

That was almost the same for all the stores in the shopping district with the exception of soba restaurant “Bamboo Thicket Retreat”, as customers would be visiting the shrine for Hatsumode³ from 3 p.m. to midnight during New Years.

[Well, this year’s Saturday is at a good time.]

However, there were no New Year holidays for otherworld dining hall.

There seemed to be a custom to celebrate New Year at the other world, but it seemed that there's no day off from work like in Japan.

People from other world would still come to the restaurant no matter if it's New Year's Eve or New Year Day.

Rather, it was not uncommon for them to order more than usual, in the name of celebrating the arrival of a new year.

As a result, usually he did not have any other chefs to help making the preparations for Saturday, so he decided to start the preparations during the previous day and his holiday became nonexistent.

If he thought about it, the last day of work this year was on Saturday, and this year's New Year's break was also on Saturday.

...For some reason, he received orders of birthday cakes for someone's twin nephew and niece, a friend's noble daughter, one of the three disciples with their caretaker and the Flower Country.

(My childhood friend on the upper floor was laughing "this was the first time birthday cakes are sold when Christmas day is over".)

In addition, there were many orders of hors d'oeuvres for New Year's celebration.

With the customer's appetite being stronger at that day, the number of orders increased.

That's why the last day of the year for otherworld dining hall was extremely noisy.

However, it also ended with selling a potful of beef stew as usual.

Once he finished the last clean up, there was only 1 task left for him to do.

[Well, let's get to it.]

He muttered so while preparing for the closure of this year.

He took out the raw soba noodles and soba soup that were delivered by the eight

generation of Bamboo Thicket Retreat that afternoon.

While boiling a pot of water, he prepared the ingredients.

He chopped that day's leftover scallops, shrimps and vegetables finely and dipped them in coating.

(Coating has to be thick so that it doesn't melt in the soup.)

While remembering the way he was taught to make thicker coating for tempura by the uncle of the soba restaurant long ago, he dropped it in oil.

He kept watching carefully so that it didn't unravel, lifted it with a strain and left it to cool.

(Oo, next is...)

He dropped the soba into the boiling water.

He warmed the soup with a saucepan until it boiled and put it in a preheated warmer.

Then he put the boiled soba into the soup and lightly placed the freshly fried Kakiage on one side of the bowl.

[Yoshi, it's finally finished. Nekoya's special Kakiage Soba.]

He smiled satisfactorily when it's finished.

This year's Toshikoshi⁴ soba was earlier than usual.

Making soba was out of his expertise, but as both the noodles and soup were made by professionals, it should be delicious.

[Well, let's take this.]

Although he didn't dislike cooking, he's still happy that he's going to have a week-long holiday.

The owner went to the dining area with slightly lighter steps than usual.

At the dining area, Aletta who had finished her after-work shower felt relaxed.

[Fuu...]

Her sigh was a mix of fatigue and relief.

That day, she was so busy.

All the customers were looking forward to New Year and more orders had been given.

The owner was cooking in the kitchen all day long and Aletta also continued to deliver the finished food.

But the day was over. She just wanted to eat the owner's cooking and go home.

[Well, this year is over...]

It was hard for her last year during this time period when she thought about it.

She trembled in the coldness of the Empire's winter and was frightened that she would freeze to death.

[...God of Demons, I appreciate Your mercy.]

It had been one year from then. Aletta prayed her gratitude for her fortune.

The God of Demons... humans said that that was the Evil God defeated 50 years before Aletta was born.

The demons that lost their God's protection had their strength greatly reduced and lost to human beings.

There's no helping it. By the time Aletta was born, demons either lived in poverty or betted their lives in order to get rich.

If the protection given to Aletta was useful for fighting, maybe she would choose the latter path.

The protection given to Aletta... the small goat horns had the power of faith.

If she had stronger and bigger horn, she could be a priestess serving the Demon God.

Yes, it was said that the priest of her village hometown had a pair of horns 3 times larger than hers.

She guessed it was because of that. The God watched Aletta properly and blessed her with good fortune.

After believing so, Aletta started to devote her prayers more properly than before.

[O-i, Aletta, it's ready.]

[Yes!]

See, she had divine protection.

A wonderful dish to satisfy her hunger had arrived.

To that, Aletta smiled when she replied.

[Did something good happen?]

[Yes, just a little bit.]

She replied with a mysterious expression.

Although she couldn't see it, surely the Demon God had a similar figure to the owner, though there's no benefit in thinking that.

And today's supper was gently placed before Aletta.

[Etto, what is it today?]

Looking at the food, Aletta asked the owner.



It was a noodle dish of gray noodles floating in brown soup and served in a deep bowl.

And a large fried food placed on one side of the bowl.

It was similar to the pasta dishes served at the restaurant, but she had a feeling that this was different.

[This is Kakiage Soba.]

[Kakiage Soba?]

[Ou, this is made by Takebayashi-san. The soba he made is delicious.]

Saying so, the owner sat down and picked up the chopsticks he brought with him.

[Well then... let's eat.]

Aletta also picked up the chopsticks that she had become proficient in handling lately and also said her prayers.

[Demon God who watches over us... I thank you for giving me food today as well.]

She prayed a little more carefully today.

[...Ok, let's start.]

[Yes!]

Then these two people who became independent from their fathers laughed and began eating their end-of-year food.

Unfamiliar cuisine (though almost all of the dishes in the restaurant were like that) that Aletta had never seen before.

(Etto, soba is a form of noodles.)

When the owner used his chopsticks to lift a lump of noodles, Aletta imitated him.

She lifted the noodles with her chopsticks and slurped it lightly.

(Un... it's different from the previous one, but it's still delicious!)

The fragrant scent of soba and the soup spread in her mouth.

She could taste the strong flavours shoyu and umami (which the owner said was

extracted from a grass named Kombu⁵ or dried flaked fish).

It was different from the Tanmen noodles she ate before, probably because of the Wafu sauce.

[Fuu... as I thought, the soba made by that uncle sure is delicious.]

The owner who took a bite was also convinced.

(Next is... this Kakiage, I guess.)

She swallowed her saliva and reached toward the main act... the Kakiage.

Aletta who had never seen the sea before deduced that this was probably made with chopped squids and shrimps, and maybe Oranie was also included too before the combination was coated.

Unlike the usual deep-fried food, the colour was pale yellow instead of deep brown, but the Kakiage had a unique presence in the food.

She tore a little portion off the Kakiage which had become soft in the soup.

She carried it to her mouth... and reflexively exhaled.

The moment she ate it, the soup absorbed by the Kakiage leaked out.

It complimented the strong taste of seafood and Oranie.

Surely the bottom half of Kakiage which absorbed the soup had different taste compared with the upper half that displayed the flavor of deep-fried food.

(Master sure is amazing.)

Not only was it delicious, but he also had a variety of ideas. Aletta's respect to him was renewed.

And she thanked him at the same time.

The owner who was a foreigner and a great cook.

She was picked up by such a person and was able to stay like this.

[N? Is something the matter? Does it not fit your palate?]

While she was thinking such, it seemed her chopsticks had stopped so the owner

asked a little anxiously.

[No. It's really delicious.]

She lightly replied the owner and continued to eat.

Perhaps she should eat the noodles with the Kakiage now...

She was thinking such.

[Fuu. Thank you for the meal.]

The owner placed down his chopsticks after a while.

[It's delicious isn't it?]

A little later, Aletta also put down her chopsticks.

Both bowls were empty of soup.

As Aletta said, it was delicious.

[Aa, eating soba once in a while is nice.]

The owner also laughed.

And the end of year at otherworld dining hall slowly finished.

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1. **Golden Week**(ゴールデンウィーク *Gōruden Wīku, Gōruden Uīku*) (or **GW**) is a week from the 29th of April to early May containing a number of Japanese holidays.
 2. **Obon**(お盆) or just **Bon** (盆) is a Japanese Buddhist custom to honor the spirits of one's ancestors. This Buddhist-Confucian custom has evolved into a family reunion holiday during which people return to ancestral family places and visit and clean their ancestors' graves, and when the spirits of ancestors are supposed to revisit the household altars. It has been celebrated in Japan for more than 500 years and traditionally includes a dance, known as Bon-Odori.
 3. **Hatsumōde**(初詣 **hatsumōde**) is the first Shinto shrine visit of the Japanese New Year. Some people visit a Buddhist temple instead. Many visit on the first, second, or third day of the year as most are off work on those days.

4. **Toshikoshi soba**(年越し蕎麦), year-crossing noodle, is Japanese traditional noodle bowl dish eaten on New Year's Eve. This custom lets go of hardship of the year because soba noodles are easily cut while eating.
5. **Kombu** is edible kelp from mostly the family Laminariaceae and is widely eaten in East Asia. It may also be referred to as dasima or haidai.

CHAPTER 55

RED BEAN SOUP (SHIRUKO)



January the third.

Technically it's still New Year, and this was the day the surrounding shops were enjoying their day off.

One shopkeeper was welcoming the beginning of work.

[Well... let's start.]

He stood alone in the kitchen and started to work.

Today, there were no employees except for the owner.

Also, the restaurant was still closed and no customers would come.

But he had to work. Because that day was... Friday.

(Chicken curry and beef stew... aa, I also have to make normal curry afterwards.)



The owner thought of the regulars' faces, especially those that would definitely come tomorrow, and he quietly made his preparations.

The day after was Saturday. The day the otherworld dining hall would open.

That door didn't care that it was Obon, end of year, New Year day or Golden Week, and there were no such thing as New Year holiday at the other world.

In other words, work as usual was required.

Usually he would cooperate with other staffs to make some preparations for

otherworld dining hall, but for large holidays that fell on Fridays, the owner had to spend a day to prepare for the day after.

(Maa, I'll just say that New Year holiday is over.)

However, the owner did not dislike it.

Sometimes when he was completely rested, he had substantial amount of energy.

The owner was willing to open the restaurant to reduce the rusting of his skills during his one week holiday.

(Well then...)

He was about to finish his preparations for New Year holiday.

This time of year, the restaurant served a unique dish for New Year.

It's a plain Japanese food, but there were customers who ordered it.

Originally it seemed that the previous generation served it as a small service during New Year, but there were customers who loved it.

Every once a year ever since the owner was a grade-schooler, he had a lot of memories of this time of year.

He couldn't say that he would stop it, so he continued though the ownership had changed.

(Will she come again this year... that onee-san with long ears?)

While thinking such, he boiled the washed red beans in a pot.

In a hollow cavity of a tree that towered above the forest surrounding it located at the deep mountain range of Western Continent, an elven wise woman opened her eyes after one year of meditation.

(Has the year changed?)

The flow of magic influenced by the sun, the moon and the stars kept shaking lightly.

It told Selena a year had passed since that day.

She rejuvenated herself by converting the forest's nature power to magical power; it

was her secret way to prevent aging and prolong her life.

The way she used it was a secret art that became forgotten when the Gods of Olden Age threw away this world and moved to another world to escape the Seven Coloured King's supremacy.

Selena was the only elf in the world that mastered it.

The elves actively studied magic, and with that magic they fought with the five pillars and the Southern monsters, at the bottom of the deep sea and the high sky, they finally advanced from the ancient period of when the world had no elves yet.

Selena who was called a genius in the days when the elves thought that they were the ruler of the world aspired to complete that magic at the age of 100 years old.

To deny the end of life, she had sought immortality without discarding her body as she did not want to become an undead.

Selena of that time, she sought the secret art to live forever developed by excellent elf magicians and advanced it further...

She could not believe in the arcane art that required her to discard her body and lived in a way similar to a spirit or a lich.

Certainly, her body was brittle, but unlike spirits which would disappear once destroyed, elves were creatures that were originally born with physical body

She never thought of abandoning it and she had a feeling that doing so would have side effects.

Serena's fear was a fact.

All the elves that threw away their flesh and became liches went mad in less than 1,000 years.

As they didn't have their physical bodies, they were touched with death and their spirits became corrupted. In the end, they became monsters that indiscriminately caused death.

Although mad, the magicians that practice old magic were powerful, so they still exist in the present day.

(Eternity, huh... it's lonely.)

500 years to complete the theory, 300 years to arrange the forest environment and her body to use the magic.

The secret art was finally completed after 800 years, approximately the lifespan of an elf. As long as she lived in this forest, Selena did not need food or water to live.

And that eternity brought Selena long research time and solitude.

It had been 3,000 years since the arcane art was completed and she became immortal.

Those that Selena could call acquaintances when she was still living in the Forest Capital (excluding those that became insignificant and devastated lichens) had all passed away.

(Oh, well. There's something that I can enjoy recently.)

Such a small change in her life occurred 30 years ago.

In the forest, a door to another world, which was a remnant left behind by her old brethren, had appeared.

(...I'm really looking forward to it.)

Beyond the door was a place that served meals in exchange of money.

In that place, called the otherworld dining hall by humans and monsters, there was a food served only once in a year when the year changed.

Food using rice cakes that were made by pounding rice which was widely eaten in the Western Continent.

Because of it, Selena only visited once a year.

A few days later when the New Year had come.

[...It's here.]

Selena saw a black door in the forest and headed there.

A small spring used by animals for water source.

The spring was silent as most of the forest's animals were hibernating.

A magical door with a picture of a cat.

Selena grasped the door's handle... and turned it.

The sound of invoked magic comfortably echoed in the silent forest.

While listening to it, Selena slowly stepped inside.

A warm, bright room as opposed to the cold, dim forest.

It was crowded with customers that were celebrating the New Year.

[Fumu... mu.]

Looking around the restaurant, Selena found the male and walked to his direction.

According to the story told by the wind flowing in the forest, the number of half-elves had increased for the last 1,000 years.

The monsters that prayed to their God and gained an increase in physical and magical power, they who had different cultures were the elves' former bitter enemies.

They celebrated the New Year without worrying about Selena that just entered and ate a lot of food.

(It's a place that changed as swiftly as ever. This place... oo.)

Though normal elves wouldn't change in 10 or 20 years, this restaurant showed a drastic change. She found an acquaintance eating slowly in a corner of the restaurant and approached that person.

[It has been a long time... Christian.]

[...If it isn't Selena-sama. It's been a year.]

In a casual way, Christian greeted her politely.

Because he knew her identity.

A legendary elf that was roughly 10 times older than him.

Although it was only a story that he heard since she disappeared to who knows where, apparently there's no doubt that she's still alive.

He had only met her in the restaurant so he didn't know where she lived.

[Umu... it seems that you have changed a little...]

Selena who was talking a bit old-fashionably found a change in her acquaintance.

[Well, have you eaten the Mochi in this restaurant?]

Christian was eating a Mochi with rotten beans called Natto.



But didn't this man eat Mochi seasoned with "shoyu" and wrapped with black sea grass until last year?



So she asked him.

[No, this... I got a hint from a friend that I recently met.]

To that question Christian said what he was taught by his friend's daughter half a year ago.

[Natto goes well with wheat noodles, but I found that it also fits with rice, so it should go well with Mochi.]

...When he tried to order it, it seemed that it was eaten regularly in the other world since it immediately came out.

Rice cake with Natto, which was slightly thicker than usual.

The unique sticky Natto went well with the soft chewy Mochi, greatly satisfying Christian.

[Fumu. Indeed it is reasonable... well, well.]

She wanted to try the Natto Mochi, but her aim was something else.

[Excuse me, young lady. I would like to place an order.]

[Ye~s, please wait a moment.]

The waitress hired by the owner wore different world clothing. She delivered the food to the appropriate tables and came to take the order.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. I'm ready to take your order.]

[Well... first, I would like a bowl of red bean soup.]

Red bean soup.

It was a dish that only appeared on the first day of the year at this restaurant.

And while listening to stories of studying the difference of "rotting" and "fermentation" being done by Christian, the food came out.

[Sorry to keep you waiting. Here's your order!]

In front of Selena, a bowl filled with red brown soup and white Mochi was placed.



[Fumu. Let's partake.]

That's right. First she breathed in the steam coming out of the soup.

A sweet smell filled her lungs.

To that scent, her stomach growled waiting for its first meal in a year.

She then scooped it with a wooden spoon and ate it.

[Hoo...]

She sighed involuntarily to that sweet flavor in her mouth.

The sweet softness of the beans was different from the fruits growing in the forest and the honeys that could be taken from honeycombs.

Unlike the other sweets of this restaurant, this taste that did not use milk and eggs but could only be eaten once a year was what Selena longed for.

(This sweet red bean soup is really delicious.)

With that thought, she then picked up a pair of chopsticks to eat the Mochi.

She gently pinched the Mochi.

Because it was difficult to cut a Mochi, she carried it to her mouth though it was bad manners and cut it apart with her teeth.

(Umu... umu.)

When she chewed on it, the flavor of the soup also spilled out from the boiled Mochi. The sweetness intertwining with the fresh Mochi showed a different face from before. The Mochi became sweeter the more she chewed, the sweetness became even stronger.

(This taste is delicious after all.)

It was the same impression as when she first ate it.

Selena was satisfied to eat it once a year.

[...Fuu.]

After finishing the bowl, Selena washed the taste from her mouth with the Genmaicha¹ that was served along with the food.

[...Well then, young lady.]

After a breath, she called the waitress again.

[Yes? How may I help you?]

[Umu. I would like to order again. Isobe² and Kinako³. Also the Natto that that man is eating.]





Serena's physical condition was perfect all the time due to the forest's power.

So she did not have the option of not enjoying her once in a year meal.

[Tonight is a banquet. I shall eat until my belly burst.]

Then, Serena's New Year began.

-
1. **Genmaicha** also called brown rice green tea, is the Japanese name for green tea combined with roasted brown rice.



2. Isobe Mochi is mochi (sometimes toasted) slathered with shoyu and wrapped with seaweed. It's what Christian used to eat.
3. Kinako is sesame powder.

CHAPTER 56

HAMBURG STEAK



TN: To those that watched the anime before, you know what this chapter is about. To those that haven't, be warned that this chapter is full of sweetness.

There was a country named Sea Country located at the eastern end of the Western Continent.

The country was made up of coastal cities and numerous small islands where humans, beasts, demons and others lived.

Islands... Sea Country had a variety of islands but the amount of products that could be obtained from each islands were never many.

Therefore since ancient times, in exchange of such products... trade had been carried out frequently and at the same time, sea navigation techniques had been polished.

Speaking of the Sea Country of Western Continent, its history had great influence on the present. It was a trade nation that prospered greatly due to their trade with the Eastern Continent that had become peaceful after the war.

As such, there were an innumerable number of islands that were not suitable for intelligent creatures to live.

It was one of such islands where Alte led Roukei, a young fisherman who lived by selling homemade dried fishes after he received a small boat from his father and lived independently.

[Hey...]

[What?]

Still, not long after the morning sun had risen, Roukei turned to Alte and asked.

Alte, who was a mermaid hailing from the Southern Ocean with brown skin, ocean coloured hair and eyes, and the lower body of a fish though her upper body was slender like the people of Sand Country, turned around and listened with a serious look.

[No, it's just... is it really there?]

Looking at the clear ocean coloured eyes, Roukei blushed and became flustered.

[Yeah... when I found it, it was useless to me since I had nothing with me. I can go now thanks to Roukei. I appreciate it.]

Alte nodded to Roukei.

Her confident face was beautiful.

It was too much for Roukei who had only known the burly women of the local fishing village.

Roukei and Alte met three days ago during a storm.

On that day, Roukei, who was swept away by the violent waves and thrown out of the sea, was saved from drowning by Alte.

The swimming mermaid was not bothered by the storm and prayed to the God of Water (which was actually the Blue God) to stop the storm.

And after the storm ceased, she brought him to an island with a village and Roukei

easily fled from death.

Of course, Roukei appreciated her help and fell in love with her beauty and kindness.

He would do anything to thank her if he could do so, was what he said to her.

...Even if the payment was somewhat rude, as Alte asked “10 silver coins” for her favour, Alte was his benefactor and an important person for him.

After handing the promised 10 silver coins... although it was an enough amount to empty a fisherman’s pocket, it was a cheap price for his life, he then asked her what on earth did she want to use it for.

He did not know everything about this world, but he had never heard of a mermaid shopping with money like a human being.

Not limited to mermaids, there were tribes of monsters that had similar appearances to human beings. However, they usually did not consider money as “worthy things”.

However, this mermaid that came from the Southern Ocean was different.

Apparently in her hometown, mermaids were known as “people who worshipped the Blue God” and traded normally with humans. They also knew the proper value of money.

However, when they journeyed to the Northern Ocean as a part of training, the mermaids who lived there did not worship the Blue God and did not try to interact with humans. As such, they normally had no use for money.

...Except for one use only.

And Alte told Roukei the sole purpose of it.

[It’s located inside the forest.]

[I see... inside the forest?]

To Alte’s words, Roukei scratched his neck and looked at Alte’s fins that were still submerged below the water surface.

It swayed in the water just like a fish.

It would be perfect for swimming underwater, but it was not suitable for walking on

land.

[No problem...]

Alte who understood his confusion prayed to the Blue God.

Since she was a priestess of one of the six pillars, she could change her legs.

What was the bottom half of a fish... changed into a pair of human legs with blue scales and sharp nails.

[Ee!?!]

[If I pray to the Blue God, I could get dragon legs... wings are still not possible though.]

Alte said a little proudly.

As Alte was an excellent priestess, she could pray to obtain the legs of a dragon.

Because of this training, it was a technique used to conduct trade with people of the land.

[Let's go. The later it is, the more crowded the place.]

She held out her hand to the still surprised Roukei.

And a bit aggressively, Alte pulled him through the forest and reached that place.

[...We're here.]

And they arrived in front of a door.

A black door with a picture of a cat that was the same as the one found at her hometown.

[Let's go.]

She took Roukei's hand and entered the door.

'Chirinchirin', while listening to the sound of the bell, they both went inside the door.

[Welcome... oya, it's been a long time, Alte-san.]

It was quite a surprise seeing that the customers who arrived early in the morning were a female that was not recently seen and an unfamiliar male brought by her.

[Long time no see. Order please?]

While returning the owner's greeting, Alte wanted to order as soon as possible.

[Yes, it's fine. The usual for you... well, what about the other one?]

As Alte's order was always the same, he only asked for confirmation, but he remembered that there was another customer that day.

Rather than a woman who was a bit older than Alte as usual, it was a sunburned black haired boy.

He was a first time guest.

[Un. Hamburg steak with demi-glace sauce. Two portions.]

Whether or not she knew the owner's concern, she ordered her usual.

It was a cuisine of baked meat of a land beast and not seafood.

Alte had been a prisoner of this dish after she was taken here by her senior as a "reward" for learning the prayer to obtain dragon's legs.

[Okay. Please wait a moment.]

The owner retreated back to the kitchen after receiving the order.

[Let's sit down.]

Alte went to a suitable seat.

[Etto, where is this...?]

After he sat, Roukei asked Alte when his head was finally able to catch up with the situation.

First, Alte obtained the dragon's legs, then there was an unnatural door in the forest, and the place beyond the door was a mysterious room.

He could not think clearly.

[This is otherworld dining hall.]

To such Roukei, Alte indiscriminately taught him.

[It's a place where people can eat demi-glace Hamburg steak.]

...But it was only recognizable for her.

Then after a while.

[Sorry to keep you waiting! I brought your demi-glace Hamburg steaks!]

A girl wearing clothes that boldly showed her legs brought their food.



Placed on the center of a black plate were vegetables with vivid colours, small yellow grain vegetables that were eaten in the Eastern Continent, and brown rounded meat with an egg on top and reddish black sauce poured over it.

It was a dish made of minced meat of a land animal that Roukei had never seen before.

It was placed on top of hot iron dish that emitted sizzling sound.

At the same time, pure white rice of fine quality was served in a separate bowl.

[Hee...]

To the sound and smell of burning meat, Roukei swallowed his spit.

[Etto, this is...]

When he tried asking, he gave up as soon as he saw Alte starting to eat the “Hamburg steak with demi-glace sauce” with a knife and fork.

[Feel free to ask any questions.]

While chewing her mouthful, Alte said that important words.

[...Un, thank you.]

Roukei who had gotten used to their unique interaction decided to start eating.

[...A, it's pretty soft, huh.]

Learning from Alte, he picked up a knife and fork and started to cut the meat first.

He thought that the meat was going to be pretty hard but it was softer than expected and the well-polished silver knife was able to cut it easily.

To that softness, it probably seemed to be soft enough to eat it with chopsticks that he was accustomed to.

[Well then...]

He brought the bite-sized meat to his mouth.

He chewed...

[...Ee!?!]

He was surprised by its deliciousness.

It was a land animal's meat that he could not eat normally.

It was a fine quality meat with no beastly smell.

Every time he chewed, the meat juice contained in the meat spread in his mouth.

Then the meat juice mixed with the sweet and sour flavor of the sauce poured over the meat.

(Thi, this... I want to eat this with rice!)

He picked up the bowl of rice and scooped it with his fork.

(Oo! This is amazing!)

The slightly sweet rice met the taste of meat juice and sauce, which made a wonderful combination.

It was good enough like that but the rice was extraordinary.

[...It's even more delicious when eaten with the egg yolk.]

Alte gave Roukei an advice and proceeded to continue eating grandly.

Alte taught him the way she was taught by her senior.

Yes, the soft taste of half-cooked egg yolk further enhanced the complex taste of Hamburg steak.

[...It's true. It's even more delicious when eaten with the egg.]

A smile was directed at Alte with such words.

It brought wonder and satisfaction to Alte.

They ate a lot and left the restaurant.

[You asked for silver coins so that you could eat at the restaurant.]

On the way back to the sea, Roukei asked and Alte nodded to his question.

[Yes.]

Listening to her answer, Roukei made a suggestion that he had thought up while feeling that his cheeks were getting hot.

[Well then, would you like to go there together with me again sometime soon?]

[Is that okay?]

To that proposal, Alte asked while tilting her head.

[Of course.]

To Alte, Roukei mustered all his courage to answer her with a smile.

CHAPTER 57

SAUSAGE WITH POTATO



After perceiving that the morning sun had rose with his enchanted helmet that enabled him night vision, Glenn caught a breath.

[It's finished.]

[Aa, it's time to change.]

While removing his helmet, he nodded to his friend Ignis who wore a similar suit of armor.

At that moment, the cold air of winter morning caressed his cheeks.

The lookout work from evening to morning was boring and sleepy, but while it was a trivial job, he always got this open feeling at the end of the work.

Especially since he knew that another “fun” was waiting.

[Well then... let's change quickly.]

Ignis was his close friend... a magnificent demon with two tusks protruding from his chin just like a boar.

On the day they had overnight watch, a soldier's work was finished until the next morning.

Yes, as long as they had enough personnel to alternate shifts, their work that day was already over.

[Oo, sorry. I guess I've let you wait for a bit.]

[So tired. Let's go back.]

When their conversation was finished, another shift workers came.

A dwarf soldier as tall as Glenn's waist carrying a large axe and a half-elf soldier with sharp ears carrying a spear. They both wore the Empire's light armor.

[Ou. I leave it to you.]

They lightly greeted the two familiar people and returned to their dormitory together.

In the Empire, it was said to be easy to become a soldier as long as one had "a good head and a healthy body that could understand discipline and order", so it's not uncommon that the soldiers were of different races.

Although it was not as rewarding as adventurers and mercenaries, it was much less dangerous because their enemies were of a more suitable scale of power.

Therefore, becoming a soldier were one of the more popular jobs in the Empire, those who had no skill or education and those who couldn't inherit their household chose to conscript to the military.

After a while when the sky was brightening, there were two figures of Glenn and Ignis who sheathed their swords and took off their armors.

[The city is empty as usual.]

[Ou.]

Created near the fort, the town still had a rough atmosphere.

It was a small town where people who had restored a broken fort created during the

war lived there and applied soldiers were sent there from the capital for its defense.

For entertainment, they could go to a brothel though there were only country girls or a shop that sold commodities from the capital.

For food, soldiers would go to the bar most of the time as it served better meals and alcohols than the food served at the fort.

[Well, I'm blessed with just being here.]

[I agree.]

However the two's destination were neither the bar nor the brothel.

They walked among the town that was just starting to wake up.

[Alright. It's there when it's morning.]

[Ou.]

A black door nestled quietly in the back alleys.

It seems that there was another person that "used" it in the town, so they could only go there only during the morning after their watch duty.

Nodding, Glenn opened the door.

'Chirinchirin', while listening to the clear bell sound reverberating in the quiet morning, they both went through the door.

[A, welcome! You're both as early as ever.]

Early in the morning, there were almost no customers yet.

After her breakfast, Aletta who had been cleaning the room noticed the customers and greeted them.

They were customers that just started to come recently, but since they usually came early in the morning, it was easy for her to remember them.

[Yo~o, Aletta-chan. You're as cute as ever.]

[O, ou. It's been a while.]

Glenn greeted cheerfully while Ignis blushed as he replied seeing her exposed legs that

felt a little sensational though it had a sense of cleanliness.

[Thank you very much. Are you ready to order?]

While thanking them both, Aletta asked for their order.

[Ou, I would like a platter of sausage and potato as usual. Half of the sausages are boiled and the other half grilled. And I would like 2 mugs of beer too.]



[I would like two cups of cider. Serve it in a mug.]

Glenn and Ignis ordered as they were familiar with Aletta.

[Yes, please wait a moment.]

After Aletta retreated to the kitchen, they went to an appropriate table.

[[Fuu...]]

Sitting on a chair with comfortable, high-quality cushions, they exhaled and relaxed while waiting for their food.

Overnight watch shift was the most tiring shift.

That's why they had long awaited for this.

[Sorry to keep you waiting! I brought your order!]

On a tray, Aletta brought their drinks and food.

[Ou! I've been waiting!]

[It's here!]

They cheered seeing the food on the middle of the table.

Pork intestine stuffed with meat and Baron's fruit split in 8 and fried in oil.



The food had fragrant aroma and was still hot, it hit the two's stomachs that were empty after their work.

And their glass cups were filled to the brink.

[Well then, please enjoy.]

Aletta returned to her work and left the two with their modest banquet.

[Yoshi, why don't we drink first.]

[I agree.]

They gulped down their large glass of cold drinks.

Glenn's mug was filled with golden bubbles, a different world ale.



While in Ignis' mug was crystal clear sweet drink with transparent bubbles.



They finished it at once.

They drank to water their throats.

The combination of sweetness and bitterness of alcohol passed through their throat while its bubbles fizzed.

Each drink healed their thirst.

[[Fuha-!]]

To the stimulation of the fizz, they relaxed in their seat.

[The liquor here is the best, the beer particularly. It's wrong not to drink it here.]

[No, it's the cider. We could drink ale at our world but this sweet water does not exist there.]

They rebutted as they competed with each other.

Each thought that their choice of drink was the best, so they couldn't help but to say that every time.

[...Well, let's eat.]

[Ou.]

They put their second cup aside and started to eat the dish that suited both beer and cider.

Platter of potatoes fried with oil and fried sausages.

It's ideal for drinking because it's cheap for its amount, it was a relatively common dish in the Empire but it was different here.

Glenn immediately reached to the fried potatoes.

His fork pierced into the thickly sliced Baron's fruit.

When he brought it to his mouth, the salty flavor of its seasoning and the flavourful Baron's fruit crumbled inside his mouth.

(Ou! This thing is really delicious!)

He picked up his beer.

He recalled the days when he would grab a coin as a kid and went to a fried potato stall during cold weather.

In those days, croquettes that were coated with flour and fried in oil was a feast for the child him.

The fried potatoes of this restaurant were much more delicious, but it tasted nostalgic to Glenn.

On the other hand, Ignis reached for the sausage first.

(It should be “grilled” after all.)

When the sausage was boiled, the taste was overflowing with meat juice. But Ignis preferred the taste of burnt intestine.

He pierced the grilled sausage and brought it to his mouth.

He knew that sausages fit with the red sour ketchup and yellow spicy mustard served in small bowls, but he wanted to eat it just like that first.

(Ou, this thing here sure uses good meat.)

It reminded him the taste of his homeland.

Even if the demon tribe was recognized, its pioneer village was still poor and their crops were still of low quality.

Because they always had empty stomachs at such a place, the men would grab a bow from the time of war and went to hunt at the mountains. On those days, they stuffed their stomachs with meat.

[Un. I should eat it with my liquor.]

Then he drank his cider.

The numbing sweetness made his tongue tingling and it washed the leftover meat juice in his throat.

For Ignis who hated the bitter taste of ale, this suited the food.

For a while, those two enjoyed their food without saying anything.

Fried potatoes with ketchup and sausages with mustard seemed to disappear from the plate...

[Ou! Another serving please!]

[Beer and cider too!]

As soon as the plate was empty, they ordered again.

Their feast of two people was always like this.

They did not speak unnecessarily and just ate.

They ate until their belly would burst.

Then after a while.

[...O, is it time for you to go?]

[Sorry. I still have some account calculations to do.]

When the restaurant was becoming crowded, they stood up.

[Okay... since the bill is 3 silver coins and 6 copper coins, each person pays 1 silver coin and 8 copper coins.]

They gave the money to the owner who came from the kitchen.

[Well then, come again.]

[We will.]

They returned after that.

[Yes, I'll be waiting anytime.]

The owner answered with a smile.

When they returned to the town, the sun had reached its peak and the town was bustling.

[Yoshi, let's go back.]

[Ou, I want to sleep until the evening.]

On the way back, they saw a knight with better equipment than theirs and thought of their future plans.

Let's sleep until the evening and think of the rest after that.

The two drowsy people with full bellies considered the same thing.

And they returned to their usual dirty fortress.

CHAPTER 58

GENOVESE



TN: It's a somewhat sequel of the previous chapter featuring the other user of the door.

He confirmed that the black door was nestled quietly in the back allies and the Empire's knight, Graham Bertrand, gently breathed.

[I'm glad. It's there today.]

Such a voice leaked out from his lips.

7 days ago, the door had already disappeared when he visited the door at noon.

This was not the first time and it seemed that someone in this city "used" it since it was not the first time it happened.

He did not like that there was an unknown customer that used it, but he couldn't complain here.

Anyway, he would use it today.

While thinking so, he opened the door.

He heard the gentle bell sound for the first time in 14 days.

While listening to it, he stepped through the door.

Graham stepped into a closed basement room.

The room was bright like daytime though there was not a single window, a wonderful room that was warm though it was winter and had no fireplace.

[Welcome to Western Restaurant Nekoya!]

At the same time Graham came in, a demon girl who was carrying a tray of food greeted him cheerfully.

[Aa, let me go to a proper seat.]

He replied to the girl and went to an empty seat.

[Sorry, please give me the menu.]

[Ye~s!]

He sat and asked for the menu book that summarized the cuisines of this restaurant... at the same time to encourage the girl.

[Well then, please let me know if you're ready to order.]

[Aa.]

He opened the menu while watching the girl go and pondered what to eat.

(...Again, it's seafood than land food.)

The dishes listed on the menu were abundant and he knew that they were all delicious, but Graham's eyes were more attracted to seafood selections...

Cooking with seafood like Kraako and Schripe.

(...I thought meat was good for everyday like when I was back in my hometown.)

While looking at the menu, he missed it a little bit.

Graham's hometown was a port town swallowed by the Empire several decades ago.

Trade ships visited from other eastern mainland ports and from the far Western Continent every day and people bustling around, the city with ocean scent.

Every day at Graham's house which was a household of successive knights, there was always a kind of seafood on their table.

Young Graham liked the meat brought as a trade item, but when he lived in the inner part of the Empire where there was no trace of sea and he had to eat meat and Baron's fruit every day, he wanted to eat seafood.

Furthermore, even in the Capital City, the seafood was valuable commodity and he who had just passed the knight's test (anyone could become a knight as long as they passed the test) did not get a large salary.

That's why, this restaurant that served seafood and liquor at a price that was affordable enough for his salary was a valuable place for recreation.

(Well, I can get deep-fried, gratin, pilaf... no, it's pasta.)

There were many kinds of food that used seafood in the otherworld dining hall.

Wearing a fine quality military clothing and a sword hanging from his waist, was a knight with better skill than Graham eating deep-fried seafood.

A dish of Schripe that used a sauce originating from the Kingdom that the commoners liked to eat.



A dish using Western Continent rice preferred by an aristocratic daughter of Sand Country that wore Empire-style clothes.



And a dish that used not only seafood, it also used Kingdom style pasta that was cooked with various kinds of sauces.



Graham was troubled every time. Especially since liquor had to be adjusted depending on which dish he had chosen.

(Alright... today is white wine and pasta.)

[Excuse me, I would like to order.]

After a while, Graham finally decided what to order.

[Yes, what would you like to order?]

[Aa, today I want white wine. And pasta... that's right, first I want Genovese with seafood.]

He chose the green pasta with the fragrant aroma of herbs.

[Okay. Please wait a moment.]

[Umu.]

The waitress went back to the kitchen after receiving the order and Graham leaned back on his seat while he waited.

He could hear the voices of the customers in the restaurant.

Some had conversations with other customers sharing the same table, and some waited for their orders like Graham.

There were various races, and he was surprised every time they came.

(It's just that, this dish is delicious...)

He understood that feeling.

He himself had visited this restaurant every time he could ever since half a year ago when he found the door.

[Thank you for waiting! I brought your alcohol and food!]

And the dish he waited for had come.

A beautifully shaped green bottle and a green pasta dish.

[Well then, please enjoy!]

[Aa, I will.]

While replying to the waitress, Graham started to eat.

(First... it's alcohol.)



He gently pulled the wooden cork sealing the bottle and poured the wine into a glass cup with delicate leg.

The slightly yellowish white alcohol flowed from the green bottle.

As it poured, the fragrance of the white wine tickled his nose.

(Umu, such a fine scent.)

First of all, he enjoyed the scent for a while and carried the glass to his mouth.

The alcohol had a combination of little sweetness and acidity.

It was the taste of fine wine that should have been more expensive than its price of two silver coins.

(If this circulated in the Empire, the liquor merchants would go bankrupt.)

Even though he was a knight, he was familiar with trade business due to his hometown.

A restaurant with abnormally high quality for its price.

If the entrance was not a “door” with its inconvenience, it would have been more popular.

(Well then, I should eat before it cools down.)

Since he just tasted his wine, he started on his food.



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Pasta dish cooked with vivid green sauce and fine oil.

And that dish had big fresh seafood as its ingredient.

(First, the pasta.)

Graham used his fork to wind up the pasta.

The noodles stained green by the sauce were illuminated by the light and shone vividly.

His saliva overflowed due to its beauty and aroma... and he ate it.

(Umu, this taste! It's the deliciousness of pasta!)

The boiled pasta that was not too hard, not sticky, and not too soft were intertwined with the complicated seasonings.

The taste of fish, shellfish, Kraako and Schripe which were used as ingredients.

The fragrant sauce made of aromatic herbs and savoury toasted nuts.

And the toughness of Togaran tightened the taste.

By putting it all together, Genovese was a complete dish.

(Umu, umu...)

The taste made Graham silent and he continued to eat without a sound.

Wind up the pasta, bring it to his mouth, and occasionally eat the ingredients in between the pasta.

Every few mouthful, he drank his wine and enjoyed the refreshing taste.

Graham was a young man.

That plate of Genovese was finished quickly.

(Fuu... I wonder if this is the first place.)

For the time being, Graham was comfortable with his belly.

(Now...)

Of course, with only one plate, Graham's stomach was not satisfied.

Graham opened the menu again.

(Now, what should I order next...)

There were various other dishes in this restaurant.

Graham looked at the menu to decide his next dish.

1. There're two probabilities for these. There's:

1. Genovese sauce is a rich, onion-based pasta sauce from the region of Campania, Italy.



2. Pesto a la Genovese, the quintessential pesto recipe, is made with Genovese basil, coarse salt, garlic, Ligurian extra virgin olive oil (Taggiasco), European pine nuts (sometimes toasted) and a grated cheese like Parmigiano Reggiano or Grana Padano and pecorino sardo or pecorino romano.



CHAPTER 59

TIRAMISU



On Satur's day, the great priestess serving the Goddess of Light called Katarina graciously rewarded and spoke to the boy in front of her.

[Son of the greatest one, white child. What kind of direction is suitable for this time?]

She knew the reason why she was called, but she accepted with the expression of gratitude.

There were not many people of this world that Katarina who had the greatest power among the priests of the White Goddess that controlled light and could even transform into a dragon respected.

...The boy was one of those not many existences.

[Good. Such a formal greeting. You will know.]

A boy with white skin, silver hair and glowing gold eyes of a dragon perceived Katarina's attitude as a matter of course and issued an order.

He knew. He was a “child of white” that was chosen by the benevolent White God that was sent to her faithful followers.

Of the six pillars reigning this world, the White Goddess, the most merciful god, liked humans.

Because humans were the weakest race with fragile flesh and poor magical powers among the believers that lived in the continents.

For those weak people, the benevolent White Goddess descended before her followers once in a hundred years.

And the descending White Goddess gave a drop of her blood to an innocent human baby who was born from a mother’s womb and a man’s seed that were carefully selected for that day.

An ordinary human’s soul would instantly be crushed, turned to insanity and transformed into a monster without intelligence. That was why the blood of White Goddess that controlled life could only be given to a baby.

The “white child” was born with the power of the great dragon that any great priest could not reach and they were brought up to lead the believers.

And the white child of this generation that was born about 10 years ago liked the otherworld confectionary.

[It’s Nekoya. We can obtain “tiramisu” over there.

...That damnable door. It keeps rejecting me.]

His line of sight pointed to the place where the door was located and he clicked his tongue.

Three years ago, the white child who kept a close eye on the confectionaries of that restaurant tried to kidnap the owner. He was then thrown away like a cat from that door by the Red woman and was rejected from that day on.

Even if he tried to touch it, he couldn’t do so.

Also, the white child was afraid.

In this world, except for the lovely white mother, there was a red woman who could easily match his power.

Therefore, the white child sent a trusted priestess who served him to the place to obtain his favourite sweet.

[...Yes, I understand. I shall depart.]

Katarina accepted the command with slight pleasure. Her black eyes turned golden with vertical pupils and he grew a pair of dragon wings covered with fine feathers before flying away.

[Umu. I'm counting on you. And it's supposed to be Valentine's Day that occurred once a year. If today was the festival day, you can also get chocolate.]



She heard those words before he flew to the door's direction.

It would take 2 days on foot but Katarina flew so she was able to reach the wilderness.

The environment was so rough that corn and Kumara couldn't grow, the summer sun shone brightly in the wilderness where cactus with its sharp spikes grew.

The area was empty as there was a proper highway not far away, so the secret of this

wilderness was hidden.

[It's also troubling for that child as well.]

Katarina landed in front of the front door. She retracted her wings and turned her eyes back to normal before she heaved a sigh.

The door was protected by the curse that the white child had applied.

If one didn't have the dragon's eyes, they couldn't see it as it was covered by the art of illusion using the sunlight.

Well, this was fine.

However, if one carelessly approached the door, the light of judgment would mercilessly slaughter even monsters and demons with strong body.

Katarina secretly dispelled the magic that was set in the wilderness.

It was possible to be set once again by the white child himself, but she would cancel it again next time.

[...Yoshi, let's go.]

She confirmed the deathly magic had disappeared and grasped the handle.

'Chirinchirin', the door opened and the sound of bell that nobody heard echoed.

While listening to it, she passed through the door and went to the otherworld.

The otherworld dining hall was the same as ever.

The customers who had arrived were eating the food they ordered.

(How unlucky. It seems I'm a little early.)

She confirmed that there was no paper on the wall expressing "Happy Valentine's Day" written, so she felt a bit sorry.

[Welcome to Nekoya!]

While she looked around the area before seating, she was greeted by the waitress.

Seeing the pair of goat horns growing from her temple, in the land where Katarina lived, it was a sign of an abominable evil spirit.

[Ee, good day. It's a bit sudden, but can I order?]

However, this was a different world. Unnecessary rashness was prohibited.

Katarina smiled at the waitress.

[Yes of course! What would you like to order?]

The waitress... Aletta replied while smiling.

It was not uncommon for customers to come in and order suddenly.

This woman with cocoa skin and cream coloured hair was such a type.

[Then, I would like to takeaway a whole tiramisu cake. Oh, I would like to eat it here as well, so I wonder if you can serve me a serving. For the drink I want the one made by Karao¹ beans... I mean cocoa.]



[Yes! Thank you very much! I'll serve it to you soon! ...A, yes. Another serving of chicken curry.]



Aletta returned to the kitchen after listening to the order while Katarina looked around.

(Well then... where should I seat?)

Katarina was a white priestess. She was also a great priestess that was entrusted with taking care of the white child.

(The blue over there... I wonder if should stop by at the side of Lucia's clan.)

Together with the blue mermaid priestess that had dragon legs eating the meat dish of land animal accompanied by an unfamiliar boy were the great priestess of the Red Goddess and a human priest eating eggs that were enveloped by meat.

(If it comes to it... that's right.)

Then after thinking a while, she decided where to seat.

[I'm sorry, Celestine-san. Can I seat next to you?]

Katarina spoke to the group of priestess serving the White Goddess who she first saw a few years ago.

They wore thick, unfamiliar robes though it was midsummer and wore weirdly shaped gold and silver necklaces. At first sight, they didn't seem to be followers of White Goddess.

However, the power of light flowing in them was undoubtedly the power of the White Goddess.

Katarina was aware that they served the same Goddess.

[Ee. There's no problem, Katarina-sama.]

Celestine, the senior priestess wearing a gold necklace and was the strongest in the group, replied smilingly.

She was a priestess from the Sand Country which was as hot as summer all year long and her thin clothing showed her burned brown skin despite midwinter.

She was likely to be a high priestess that's travelling incognito or ashamed for not being able to endure the temptation of sweetness like Celestine.

...That was why Celestine felt a sense of closeness.

[Are you ordering your usual, Katarina-sama?]

[Ee. You too?]

Instead of answering, the two people smiled.

They only communicated with it. Because,

[Thank you for waiting! A set of pound cake with black tea and a set of tiramisu with cocoa!]





Yes, because those two were fascinated with cake.

A plate and a cup were placed before Katarina.





On the plate was a cake made of black and white stacked alternately.

The black “cake fabric” which was kneaded with soft cocoa powder and white “cream cheese” using cow milk were beautiful.

Then the grinded cocoa powder was sprinkled softly on top of the cake.

(Well, let’s eat... I would like to taste the cake that fascinated the white child.)

She made a little excuse in her mind and started to eat.

She tried the hot chocolate first.

The steam rose with its sweet scent and the taste gently spread in her mouth.

The soft taste of steamed milk, the scent of bitter cacao and the sweetness of sugar harmonized together.

(Un. This degree of oiliness tasted nice.)

It’s better for this drink if the degree of cacao oil did not overpower the original taste of milk.

The Karao beans that Katarina knew... the seeds of the Karao fruit contained a large amount of oil.

Thanks to that, it could be drank if it’s refined, people could drink it as a medicine... it was too bitter to be drank as a beverage, so Katarina disliked it.

However, this hot chocolate was different.

The powder that this drink was made from was created by thoroughly extracting the oiliness of Karao beans.

It was easy to drink thanks to that.

(Well... next is the tiramisu.)

After enjoying the hot chocolate, she started on her cake.

Using her fork, she cut a little of the upper edge of the cake.

Above the fork was white cream sprinkled with cacao powder.

She took it to her mouth... and her face instinctively loosened.

(This is really delicious... I wish we could make it in our world.)

Sugar was added to the sweet mellow cheese.

It was so soft that it melted in her mouth.

And within that sweetness, there was a hint of bitterness.

The bitter taste of unsweetened cacao powder accented the overall taste.

And it was on her second bite that she was pushed by the taste.

She cut the black cake layer this time.

The cake dough was soaked with otherworld tea named coffee.

Its bitterness was different from cacao beans.

(Cake is limited to tiramisu after all.)

Every cake here was delicious, but none compared to the complex flavor of tiramisu.

The different layers had different flavors by simultaneously eating the overlapping ones.

Custard cream that was created from abundant amount of eggs was used for the lower part of the cake.

Here, a little alcohol was added, the peculiar bitter taste of liquor had good compatibility with the strong sweet taste of custard.

And the bottom part was what that supported the cake.

It was a hard baked confectionary.

That baked part had crisp savoury flavor.

It gives crispy texture to tiramisu that was almost entirely made of cream and soft cake.

Each layer had several different tastes mixing together, giving birth to different flavor combinations.

This complexity was tiramisu's appeal.

When thinking such, she had finished the cake.

[Can you give me another tiramisu?]

[Yes, thank you very much!]

Katarina ordered another one without hesitation.

After fully enjoying her tiramisu and chatting happily with other white priestesses, Katarina exited the door with her takeaway.

[Well... I must hurry and return.]

As she muttered so, she grew her wings.

After all, she still needed to give the cake to the white child.

He was probably waiting silently while thinking that she was "late".

She needed to hurry home.

[Really, such a troublesome child. To think he told a high priestess to run an errand.]

Katarina smiled as she muttered.

Her reason was not just "side benefits".

[...Maa, this is nothing like my mother would do, but I don't mind.]

After such words, she flew away.

To give a sweet cake to her son who became the white child as soon as he was born.

...Giving food to a baby chick, just like a mother bird.

TN: Rather twisted that her child had higher position and ordering his mother around.

1. Karao – Cocoa.

CHAPTER 60

ALMOND CHOCOLATE



The second week of February.

A little earlier than Aletta, Nekoya had a visitor earlier than usual.

[Ou. I'm depending on you again this year... I made a little bit of it.]

While saying so, the owner of Flying Puppy gave his childhood friend beautifully wrapped products.

[Aa, thanks.]

He replied so.

One of the biggest revenue earning days for Japanese confectionary shops, Valentine's Day.

One of them had an important meaning for the Flying Puppy.

Every year, he made a variety of chocolate products specifically for this day, and three days before, he opened a baking class for girls (including some men) who wanted to attend such classes.

And he advertised and sold a lot of chocolate at that time.

During this period, which occurred twice a year, Flying Puppy carried out a large-scale bargain sales every weekend.

Also, at that time, to prevent being “sold out”, Flying Puppy made a certain amount that almost certainly would not be sold, as such, a considerable amount of unsold products would be left every year as a matter of course.

...After all, there was “Valentine Fair” that was held at Nekoya on the next Saturday.

[This will be good. Of course we wouldn’t sell this left over products at half price. I would appreciate it if you would sell it at its usual price.]

The manager said so with an innocent smile.

His childhood friend would leave after dropping off the unsold products every year.

It was a fact that he thought that it was a pleasant case for Flying Puppy as he wouldn’t suffer from unsold products.

[Well, when there are people who look forward to this every year, I have to do it.]

The owner said with a wry smile.

Initially, he was surprised when he was asked by his friend to sell the little confections, but now when he thought of it, it was a festival that sold valuable products that couldn’t be obtained over there (he didn’t explain what kind of festival this was), so there was a number of regulars that looked forward to it.

He couldn’t stop midway so he continued to do so once a year.

(Ah, that’s right.)

After attaching a paper stating “Today is Valentine’s Fair” in Japanese at a prominent place in the dining hall, he returned to the kitchen and came back carrying a mountain of sky coloured boxes with a picture of winged dogs on them and laid them down sideways.

[Maa, since I'm being asked... I have to do it properly.]

He muttered while suddenly feeling lonely.

Although he had a regular customer that asked him for a “reserve” every year, said customer had not come back for the last few years.

...It was because the owner understood what it meant for the past decade, but the owner did not intend to abandon it.

While holding a sore head, Junior silently climbed a mountain under a cloudless blue sky.

(It's cold...)

Although it was midsummer, the mountain was the highest in that area, so appropriate clothes to withstand cold weather were needed.

The summit was Junior's destination.

[Just a little more. Please do your best master!]

Beside him was Maribel, his disciple who encouraged him, carrying luggage up despite being a female.

In contrast to Junior, Maribel didn't look tired.

Junior was a treasure hunter with many years of experience so he was confident with his physical strength, but Maribel was protected by the divine protection of the Red Goddess.

(Damn, why is it on top of the mountain...)

It was poisoned a little by the energetic antics of his disciple, but he knew that it couldn't be helped even if he said it out loud.

The ruins made in remote areas were easy to protect, and treasure hunters like Junior would go there if there was treasure.

Junior's real name was William Gold.

The same name as the legendary gold hunter was not a coincidence; it was inherited

from his great grandfather.

...While his parents wanted to be merchants of the Gold Company, Junior wanted to be a treasure hunter like his great grandfather.

He thought that as long as there was talent, it was possible.

There was information of various ruins collected by the first William Gold that he had never visited before his retirement.

He thought that exploring those ruins was what he had to do to follow his name.

...One of those ruins was an invasion magic device made to attack the elves that worshiped a being named as “supreme king” that lived at the Southern Continent, but it was abandoned due to malfunction.

Then, when he was stranded in Southern Continent where he did not understand the language, he traveled there for 10 years while desperately memorizing the language.

In that decade, Junior had become a first-class treasure hunter.

And it was for the sake of treasure that made Junior climbing up a mountain he had never climbed before.

[Yoshi! Here we are! According to my dad’s diary, there’s a door here... uo!? It’s serious!?!]

When the sun had slightly tilted to the west, Maribel who arrived a little earlier than Junior shouted in surprise.

[...I see. A door. So your dad’s story is true.]

Junior admired that somewhat strange sight.

A rocky place where snow piled up, spreading on top of the mountain with no obstructions.

At the center of that place, there was an out of place black door.

[Honestly, I thought that it was a lie, but it really is “Nekoya’s door”.]

Maribel said after seeing it.

Her father... a man who was an excellent warrior and priest that died in a war with the

White Goddess believers that tried to destroy the Red Goddess' religion three years ago left it in his diary.

A mysterious door that led to otherworld dining hall which was also the sacred place of the Red Goddess, appearing on top of the mountain once in 7 days.

And once a year, a festival was held in the restaurant at midsummer and sweets of Karao beans were sold in honor of it.

[Yoshi... let's go.]

[Yes!]

After a while, Junior opened the door.

'Chirinchirin', the two stepped into the otherworld.

A foreign world of Nekoya. It was a surprising sight for both of them.

[Wow~. So this is the otherworld called Nekoya...]

Maribel looked around while soaking in the air of a different world.

As it was written in the diary, the room was bright like noon and felt strongly of the Red Goddess. Other people were eating their own food.

[U~n, there are many people with the same pale skin colour as master...]

He told Maribel that observational ability was important for a treasure hunter.

There were many customers in this restaurant.

However, most people who ate here had pale skin like her master instead of the more familiar brown skin.

(...Un? Master?)

After observing, she noticed that her master was staring at one point.

He was staring at a woman.

Apparently the woman around Maribel's age was eating a brown food covering in black sauce, which seemed to be made of meat; her white skin was burnt by the sun.

She was also surprised by seeing Junior.

[...What's wrong? Love at first sight?]

She tried to punch through the atmosphere with a joke, but there's no reaction.

...The reason was quickly known.

[...Sarah? No, no way... it's really Sarah!?!]

Junior said in surprise.

A cousin who was supposed to be living in the Kingdom as a daughter of a big business.

The last time he saw her was 10 years ago when he was still at the Eastern Continent, but his instinct didn't lie.

The Sarah that Junior knew was still in her childhood. But now, her figure was not a lady that lived in a city but a treasure hunter that emphasized mobility.

[Onii-chan!?!]

Indeed, Junior's intuition was true.

The woman... Sarah answered while being confused.

This Sarah was older than the one he remembered, but he couldn't mistake it.

Standing there was the figure of a cousin that she thought had died 10 years ago.

After Sarah finished her meal, the three of them sat on the same table and talked.

[I see. The Southern Continent... the other side of Dragon God Ocean?]

[Aa, that's true. Beyond the sea to the north... was the Dragon God Ocean, there's no mistake.]

He answered Sarah's question while taking out his tattered notebook to show his collected information.

At first, he listened to the stories about their family and the Kingdom's affair.

However, when the topic became the ruins of the Southern Continent, the two became enthusiastic.

[The ruins of elves... is there anything that lived there?]

[I don't know. But at least I don't see any living devices in the Southern Continent.]

Listening to Junior's story, Sarah became highly curious.

An unknown continent to Sarah, worshipping the dragons, saying that demons with intelligence coexisted with humans.

If she didn't feel anything when listening to that story, Sarah thought that she wouldn't be a treasure hunter.

[...Oh, right. This notebook, will you take it?]

Junior suddenly said something that he came up with.

[Are you sure!?!]

To those words, Sarah instinctively asked back.

For treasure hunters, notebooks of collected information were only second to their life.

Sometimes, it cost as much as several tens of gold coins if it's a skilled treasure hunter.

She doubted he would just give it away.

[Aa, this ruins are investigated by grandfather, but I have written down a couple of things that I have not examined yet.

Perhaps there are treasures left in the ruins, but I can't go looking for it.

Besides... tou-san and kaa-san may feel a little bit relieved if they see this.]

[...I see.]

Sarah was convinced.

Junior who went missing 10 years ago was presumed dead.

Necessary evidence was required to prove it otherwise.

Sarah also noticed that he autographed himself, and the ink on the notebook was still new.

[I understand. I'll take it then... by the way.]

At the end of the story, Sarah looked at the brown skinned girl that was silently eating Minced Cutlet.



[Is this girl a good friend of yours or something?]

[No, I'm not?]

[A, she's not. Just a disciple... tentatively, a family? This girl's sister is my wife.]

To Sarah's question, both Junior and Maribel denied at the same time.

[Aa, is that so...]

Sarah who calmed down noticed something.

[Come to think of it, I thought you come here for something? To unexpectedly find you... I never thought of it.]

Junior's equipment was a firm durable leather armor to protect against cold weather and a sword hanging from his waist. It was a full-fledged set of equipment for exploring.

Perhaps, he used a door located in a more rugged location than Sarah's.

Though he did come here to eat.

[Aa, is that so... excuse me, I would like to order please.]

[Ye~s.]

He called the demon waitress to order.

...In the first place, that was the reason why he climbed the high mountain and came here.

[Today, I heard that there is a “Valentine’s Festival” here.]

[Yes! Do you wish to order chocolate?]

He confirmed the waitress’ question with a nod and Junior proceeded to order.

[Yes. That, do you have almond chocolate? One box for “takeaway” and another box for having here.]

[I would like cow’s milk with the almond chocolate.]

It was Maribel’s and his wife’s favourite food since that sweet taste reminded them of their father.

Then a man that seemed to be the owner of this restaurant came bearing a deep bowl.

[Thank you for waiting. Here’s your almond chocolate.]

He said so while placing the bowl on the middle of the table.

[This is... I think Shia will be pleased if I give this to her.]

Sarah thought unexpectedly.

The bowl was packed with sweets with colourful sugar coating.



It did not look like a gem, but it shined vividly under the light.

[Well, master, please eat it first... I can't eat this before you.]

[Aa, then let me try one.]

He picked one up and threw it into his mouth.

(...Un? This taste like normal sugar...)

Junior was a bit disappointed by its taste.

His tired body soaked in the sweet taste spreading in his mouth.

There's nothing wrong, but honestly, it's not something that worth climbing that mountain.

(Maa, this sort of thing... uwaa!?)

At the moment he became disappointed, he chewed and it melted by the heat of his mouth.

Unlike sugar that was just sweet, the taste in his mouth had faint bitterness.

[...Hehe. It's like an egg shell covering the sweet. Chocolate made from Karao beans are easy to melt, so it's covered with shells.]



TN: I guess this is more appropriate.

Maribel laughed at Junior while remembering his surprised face.

Junior's reaction was similar to hers when she first ate almond chocolate that her

father brought home in the middle of hot summer, she was still a child back then.

She was surprised that the material used for the bitter medicine could be so delicious.

[...I see. It has a surprising taste.]

While Junior chewed on the almond chocolate that had fragrant flavor, he was convinced.

Indeed, he now understood why Maribel's father was obsessed with it and why Maribel and his wife wanted to eat it.

Almond chocolate was a delicious sweet that exist neither in the Southern Continent nor the Kingdom he once lived in.

[I recommend drinking milk after chewing it.]

Maribel also reached for the chocolate after her respected master and brother-in-law ate it.

The taste in her mouth was a nostalgic sweet taste.

When she chewed it once, the taste of bitter sweet Karao beans and the fragrant almond nuts mixed together.

It was blissful to drink warmed cow's milk after that.

[...Un. It sure is more delicious when I eat them together.]

Junior also agreed.

The chocolate with Karao beans and fragrant almonds.

And the rich flavor of warm fresh milk.

The combination was excellent, and he carelessly reached for the next piece.

[...Un. The minced cutlets here are really delicious, but sweets are delicious too.]

Sarah who sat with him also agreed while eating the chocolates one after another.

Indeed, she thought that Shia would like the sweets that many customers ordered regardless of their status or country.

Even Sarah who refrained from indulging in "luxuries" like sweets loved it.

When three adults ate the chocolate, the bowl of chocolate was finished quickly.

[...Master, I have a proposal.]

Junior turned to look at Maribel who held up her wallet.

[No, wait. You should try various things.]

Junior made a suggestion.

Anyway, it's the festival of Valentine's Day.

There were many customers who ordered chocolates different from almond chocolate.

Junior wanted to try them.

When they got out of the door with their bellies filled with chocolate, the sky was still blue.

[Well, let's go home. She must have been looking forward for the chocolate.]

[Yes!]

Their spirits had elevated after their meal in the restaurant.

(I hope she's glad as well.)

Junior rushed home while thinking of his beloved wife's happy face.

...It was a while before the notebook he handed to Sarah became manuscripts that were circulated in the Eastern and Western continents. Many people would then challenge the Southern Continent.



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